

GUIDANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN
KOTZEBUE, ALASKA

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GUIDANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN
KOTZEBUE, ALASKA

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Abstract

Tourism once thrived in Kotzebue, a rural largely Iñupiat Eskimo community in Northwest Alaska. Today there is very little evidence of the summer tourism that once characterized this remote Arctic town. Trends suggest a revival of tourism in Kotzebue, though little is being done to prepare for an almost inevitable rebirth. This research is intended to identify local concerns about tourism, the current state of tourism and offer guidance for sustainable tourism. Qualitative and inductive research was conducted to understand local feelings about tourism and possible reasons past tourism levels could not be sustained. Suggestions are given for a new direction for tourism. Secondary research examined the concept of sustainable tourism, profiles of current and potential visitors to the region, and tools and strategies to manage tourism and its impacts. The study concludes past tourism did not have major detrimental effects on the community, and there are both lingering resentment and caution about future tourism, as well as definite local interest in its development.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

When the spring came, the snow melted, the whales came north and the geese flew over our lands. We knew there would come a scientist or two to dig around and ask us questions. They would stay about as long as the geese did. The only difference was, we hated to see the geese leave (Alaska Native Science Commission n.d.).

This quote from the Alaska Native Science Commission (ANSC) website describes the “ambivalent feeling about 'eco-tourism' in rural Alaska” from an Alaska Native perspective. The reflection ends with the questions: Who will gain? Who will lose?

Similar ambivalence marks the general attitude of many toward tourism in Kotzebue, Alaska, a remote town above the Arctic Circle (Figure 1). The leaders and decision makers as well as many other residents are well traveled and have seen "tourism" in other places. Having known Kotzebue when tourism was at its height, they are very familiar with both the benefits and negative impacts of tourism.

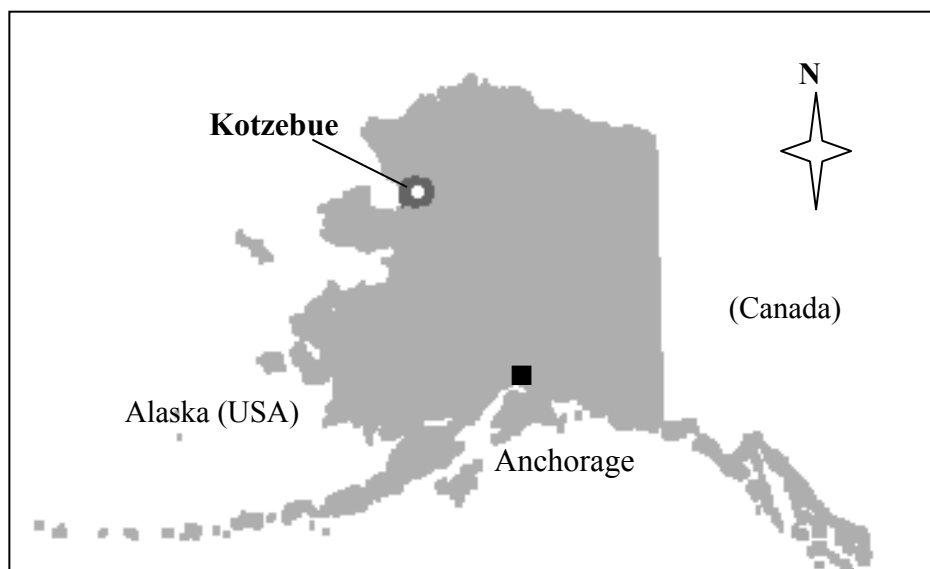


Figure 1. Location map of Kotzebue, Alaska.
(Source: Base map, NWAB website.)

How often does one hear from returning travelers, "Go before it's too late" or "Go before tourism destroys it," or before a place becomes "too touristy"? Ellen Goodman, columnist for the Boston Globe, writes in "Hawaii weighs the toll of tourism" that "Hawaii has always been a bit ambivalent toward tourists" (Anchorage Daily News, March 31, 2001), noting that Captain Cook, treated as a god when he arrived, was murdered a year later, "after he had . . . overtaxed his welcome." A myriad of articles, books, organizations, conferences, initiatives and other venues have sprung up and continue to do so, to express and address concerns about the negative impacts of tourism around the globe and how to deal with it (Boo 1990; Bosselman et al. 1999; Getz 1983; Hall et al. 1995; Johnston 1997; McLaren 1998).

As a result of international concerns about the damage caused by unplanned, uncontrolled global tourism, concepts such as "sustainable tourism" and "ecotourism" were born. Based on the definition of "sustainable development" as stated in the Brundtland Report, "Our Common Future," through the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (UNWCED) sustainable tourism "meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future" (McLaren 1998:109) and "leads to management of all resources such that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining the cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, and biological diversity and life support systems" (UNWCED 1987) of the host destination. Sustainable tourism in essence is in harmony with the local environment, community and cultures, so that these are not harmed but rather, benefit from tourism development.

I was truly blessed to have lived and traveled overseas for several years. From what I had seen of tourism as a whole, it had a long way to go to reach this lofty definition of being "sustainable." As a result of time spent overseas, I wanted to work with a small rural community where development impacts are more profoundly felt than in a larger urban area. I believed in the need for alternative, viable forms of tourism that are small scale vs. industrial; community driven and supported vs. corporate controlled or controlled from outside; and promote local entrepreneurship. Short of undertaking

the long, expensive and complex development of a comprehensive, integrated tourism management plan, my goal was community awareness of the concept of sustainable tourism, and how it might be applied to realize long-term community benefits.

Most concerns about tourism revolve around negative impacts to the land, wildlife and indigenous people, often with no control over how tourism impacts them. Thus, for Iñupiat people in Kotzebue, Alaska, whose culture and way of life are still strongly tied to the land, and for other residents who live in Kotzebue in order to be a part of that way of life, concern and ambivalence about tourism are very understandable.

As one of such residents, I would like *not* to see tourism in Kotzebue--if it is only seen and practiced as a way to make money. That would imply that whatever it takes to make more money, the better. Normally, to make more money in tourism, there would need to be more tourists and more facilities to accommodate them.

Global experience has shown that the attitude and practice of “more is better” is very short-sighted, unsustainable, and detrimental to host communities and the tourism attraction itself. (Bosselman et al.. 1999; McKercher and du Cros 2002) As a resident and one who must live with the consequences of any development in the community, I have a vested interest in well informed planning and decision making that will affect the quality of life in Kotzebue. But my connection to Kotzebue actually begins years earlier.

I first became interested in Kotzebue as a potential tourist. A friend from the Netherlands was visiting me one summer in Anchorage (Alaska), in 1992. He had signed up for a day tour to the Arctic, to a place called Kotzebue. While I had neither the means nor the desire to spend almost \$400 for a day trip to the Arctic, I was intrigued. A remote, bush Alaska community, “real” Eskimo Natives, the Arctic—my imagination was piqued.

While overseas, like most of my fellow travelers or expatriates, I had seen and experienced the good, the bad and the ugly of tourism, the latter two in cultural degradation and environmental pollution from mass tourism and from efforts by local

people and communities, especially those in so-called “Third World” or developing countries with indigenous people, to make a living by meeting the perceived and real expectations or demands of the tourist (Doan 2002; Wood 1984). Though we disdained drive-by, group-led tourism, we were still groups of camera-toting tourists, part of destructive mass tourism and part of the problem. We had met the enemy, and it was us.

Though we wanted to keep traveling, we also wanted to assuage our conscience. And we wanted more than just souvenir pictures of the Taj Mahal, Kashmiri houseboats, and remote hill tribes, but were neither sure what that was nor how to get it. Fortunately, many others felt the same, shared our dilemma, and were working on the answers.

At about the same time, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) reported that from 1980 to 1989, international tourism receipts had more than doubled to \$230 billion. Related environmental and cultural damage likewise increased. This seemed to coincide with the dramatic increase in the fledgling ecotourism industry (Whelan 1991), though few of us back then had heard of “ecotourism” or “sustainable development”—much less “sustainable tourism.”

But thanks to the concept, and marketing, of ecotourism, tourists or visitors wanted to see wildlife and magnificent unspoiled natural landscapes, and experience the culture of the people who inhabit those landscapes. Visitors wanted to be able to return or know that future generations would be able to enjoy the same experience. Tour operators wanted to profit from meeting that visitor demand or expectation. Both tourist and tour operator had a vested interest in protecting the quality and future of these “tourism resources.” This became part of the basis of concepts such as alternative tourism, ecotourism, and sustainable tourism: people do not want to destroy what they came to see; they want to be part of the solution.

1.1 The Personal Connection

In the ensuing years since I first learned of Kotzebue, I learned much more about the community’s claim to fame apart from tourism. Iñupiat from Kotzebue, many still alive today, helped shape the role of authority Alaska Natives enjoy today. I was

also learning more about the pitfalls of tourism in general, and strategies and efforts developed to address them (Hall and Johnston 1995). This further drew me to this renowned Arctic community before even one visit.

When my Dutch friend related his disappointing Arctic experience in Kotzebue, I wanted to see for myself but was hesitant. I did not want to be another drive-by, group-led, camera-toting tourist, taking photos without asking permission, and still part of the problem. I did not want to destroy what I wanted to see and experience. I wanted to be part of the solution. Ten years later I got the opportunity.

1.1.1 Why Kotzebue

Kotzebue, in rural Alaska and off-the-road-system, was once world renowned as a destination for tourists to observe Eskimo life and culture and experience a bit of the exotic life in the Arctic. For many years, thousands of tourists would visit the small community at the tip of the Baldwin peninsula all summer long. But by 2002, the year I visited, summer tourism had dropped dramatically to less than a thousand visitors.

However, my first visit to Kotzebue was not as a summer tourist, rather, it was after the solstice had just passed and it was officially “spring” in the Arctic. I had come to attend the Northwest Arctic economic development gathering and assist with the workshop on tourism development. In the National Guard Armory, where the event was held, elders in their colorful *atikluks* smiled warmly. Artists explained their craft and smiled warmly as they accepted my money in exchange for their artwork. The isolated coastal community and the landscape beyond were under thick white snow, unsullied by vehicle exhaust and mud. The temperature was a balmy 25F. Everything glittered under the long hours of the warm, bright spring sunlight.

While it was not summer, I had come to Kotzebue in part as a tourist, and in part as a volunteer to help with the economic gathering. Both experiences were memorable, beyond expectation. In fact, it was a privilege to experience the side of the community many tourists never see. Ironically, that is part of the draw of remote places. Many tourists or travelers visit remote places hoping to see few, or ideally, no other tourists,

implying a place is not touristy or artificial, but more authentic, more real (McKercher and du Cros 2002).

As a result of all the negative tourism impacts I had seen and even contributed to overseas, especially environmental, but also social, cultural and economic, my interest was working with similar coastal rural communities, preferably indigenous or largely indigenous, relatively small population, and with some tourism activity already taking place. Kotzebue met these criteria and was also chosen as the focus of this research project because it was off the road system, a characteristic that applies to many rural Alaska communities, and can be both a strength and a weakness. More importantly, Kotzebue was selected because of the personal connection made with the place and the people. The same personal connection could also form the basis for a new breed of visitor to Kotzebue and a new breed of tourism.

1.2 Problem Statement

There is much potential for a tourism rebirth in Kotzebue, once a major destination for Arctic tourism. Like many rural communities around the world, particularly small communities with limited opportunities for economic development, tourism is seen as a viable way to boost the local economy (Lindberg 2007; McKercher and du Cros 2002; McLaren 1998; Smith 1989; Snyder and Stonehouse 2007; Whelan 1991). As Mastny states on the Worldwatch Institute website, tourism “is the only economic area where developing countries consistently run a trade surplus” (2002). Many rural communities in Alaska, where conditions are often likened to a developing country, feel the same about the economic potential of tourism (Colt et al. 2007; McDowell 2004, 2006a and 2006b). Locally, interest is growing among more residents in starting tourism related small business. Especially as they look around and see their neighbor or someone from another village profit from tourism, and enjoy doing so. Additionally, a new National Park Service visitor center is scheduled to open here at the end of 2009. These and other factors indicate that tourism has the potential to increase, whether residents prepare for it or not.

Still, there is also ambivalence and even reluctance about the prospect of renewed tourism in the community. There is uncertainty in how to proceed as past tourism in Kotzebue has either been controlled and managed by outsiders or by NANA (Northwest Arctic Native Association), the local Native regional corporation. Neither incorporated consultation or planning with the Kotzebue community. It just was not done back then. The current lull in tourism buys time to plan. But it has also led to apathy and lack of awareness regarding the importance of sound tourism planning in reaping the most of potential benefits and minimizing negative impacts.

While attempts have been made, no entity—no tourism board or council, no local authority or governing body, no public or Native land manager—is undertaking the development of a long-term plan to guide and manage tourism in Kotzebue or the region. In the face of other pressing socioeconomic issues, the plan has to address more than just marketing, jobs, and money, but also sustainability, training, and improved quality of life.

With recent astronomical increases in fuel prices and corresponding increases in the overall cost of living and travel, how high the potential for tourism rebirth really is remains to be seen. Yet, this trend in higher costs makes tourism planning that much more important in capturing the market that is out there and making the most of potential benefits. Some might question the validity of the community approach to planning because it can be a painstaking and contentious process (Taylor 1995). Still, unplanned and unguided, the growth of tourism risks more negative impacts than good and also risks reviving and refueling local negative feelings about tourism.

The remote Inuit community of Clyde River in Baffin Island, Canada, was generally positive in their attitude toward the prospect of tourism development, especially for economic and cultural benefits. They were uncertain about the potential negative impacts on the environment and society and culture as they had little prior experience of tourism in their community. It was determined that before any tourism development, planning with local input and involvement to identify major issues was important in order to realize sustainable tourism (Nickels et al. 1991).

Fall sport hunting by non-locals has been and continues to be an issue of deep and significant conflict in the region, and in Kotzebue as a gateway community to the region. While the discussion of “tourists” does not raise any immediate red flags, using the term “visitors” can imply and has implied non-local hunters, and that connotation quickly puts many residents on their guard.

Research goals for this research project include the following:

- identify local concerns and expectations of tourism
- determine what strategies and guidelines used by other communities or promulgated by various international, arctic or other related entities, to manage tourism, might be applicable to Kotzebue
- suggest guidelines and best practices toward sustainable tourism in Kotzebue

1.3 Potential Outcomes

One potential outcome of this research would be that the community and its leadership will use this downturn in tourism as an opportunity to begin planning for tourism that maximizes benefits and minimizes negative effects. Hopefully, the concept and benefits of sustainable tourism would be understood and result in local support of guidelines to achieve and sustain more responsible tourism. The practice of sustainable tourism and the process to develop it would help toward alleviating resident concerns about tourism.

An ideal outcome would be to plant the seeds to cultivate a new vision of tourism for Kotzebue, including alternative forms of tourism that are viable and welcome components of the community and enhance local quality of life. Some alternatives include tourism that is nature based, culture based, and mostly, community based.

Another potential outcome would be improved capacity of residents, local businesses, and the community to create and pursue the kind of economic development, whether tourism or other, that meets community needs, improves local quality of life, protects culture, traditions and the environment, and is resilient enough to handle change.

Finally, the most important potential outcome of this research project is to avoid a tourism nightmare that not only confirms the fears of those who were ambivalent about or against tourism in the first place, but also destroys tourism potential, and worse, leaves in its place a ravaged community that residents still have to live in. Rather than a question of who will gain or who will lose, developing and implementing guidelines toward sustainable tourism will help answer the question of how to realize tourism potential while minimizing negative impacts and maximizing long-term benefits.

Chapter 2 Community Overview

Kotzebue is located in northwest Alaska, just above the Arctic Circle in the Kotzebue Sound, off the Chukchi Sea coast. Dangling off the tip of the Baldwin Peninsula, on a spit nearly surrounded by water, this Arctic town was originally known in Iñupiat as "Qikiktagruk," meaning "almost an island."

With a population of 3,135 (State of Alaska 2007), and almost half the region's residents, it is the largest city in the Northwest Arctic Borough (NWAB). Although the city boundaries cover a larger area, the town itself is only about one and one-half mile by one-half mile. The town is generally laid out along several streets, only two of which are paved, paralleling the beach in front of town. The post office, hotel, the only two restaurants, and Rotman's store comprise what used to be the town center and today remains a busy gravel and dirt road. Kotzebue, the seat of regional government, is also the transportation, services and economic hub of the region which encompasses approximately 39,000 square miles, about the size of the state of Indiana, and ten villages, most of which lie above the Arctic Circle (Figure 2).

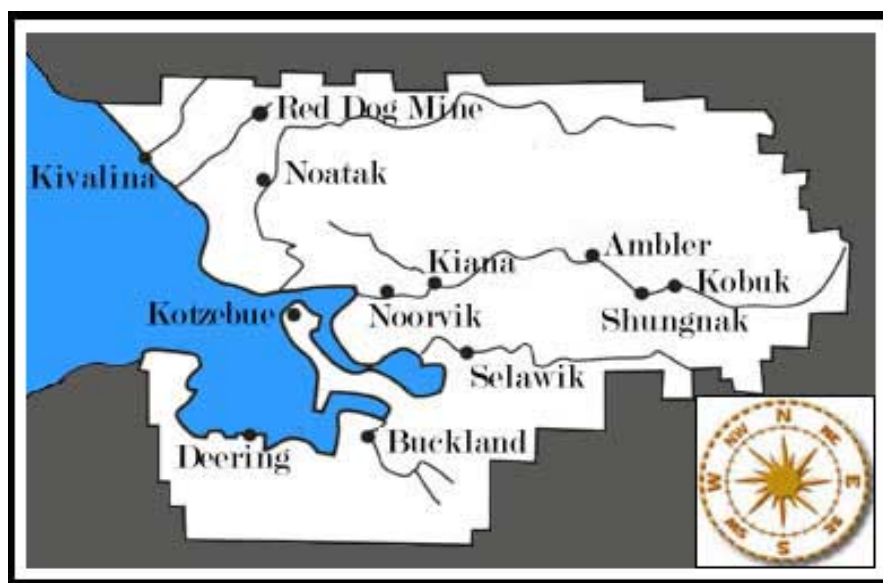


Figure 2. Location Map of Northwest Arctic Borough: Kotzebue, villages, and Red Dog Mine. (Source: Map, NWAB website.)

Rolling treeless tundra, beach bluffs, fresh and brackish marshes, plus sand and gravel beaches characterize the local landscape in the Kotzebue area. Waist to head-high shrubs cloak many hillsides and colonize floodplains. Across the Sound to the north, one can see the edge of the boreal forest at the Noatak River drainage and at the base of the imposing, distant Igichuk Hills. Stands of white spruce line the riparian corridor of this major river system (Randy Meyers, personal communication, November 11, 2008). The headwaters of the Noatak River originate far to the east at the remote edge of borough lands deep in Interior Alaska in the Gates of the Arctic National Park. This area is also endowed with several nearby designated “wild and scenic rivers.” Significant amounts of resource rich, wild terrain fall within borough boundaries, including large tracts of federal public lands, NANA Regional Corporation lands and Alaska Native allotments.

“Rural” in Alaska is more a reference to remoteness, inaccessibility and small population size rather than a designation of agricultural character as in the “Lower 48” or continental U.S. Thus, like many rural communities in Alaska, Kotzebue and the surrounding villages are not connected to any road or rail system, nor are they connected to each other by any over land system. “From Kotzebue, you would need to travel about 350 miles to reach a community on the road system” (Kurtz n.d.:1). The only year-round transportation is by air. In summer through early fall, private boats ply the waterways. Congestion or traffic is rare, as is seeing more than three boats at a time in the river. In winter through spring, the entire country opens up as the snow thickens and residents can travel by snowmachine (snowmobile) across the frozen land, lakes, sloughs, and rivers. Crossing stretches of the frozen Kotzebue Sound, local travelers also venture to Nome and neighboring rural villages and camps on the Seward Peninsula in the Bering Straits.

A few families still travel by dog team. But most dog teams are kept for the purpose of competitive sled dog racing. Locally there are sprint races and the long distance Kobuk 440. The latter attracts a number of well known dog mushers, many who have competed in or even won the world famous Iditarod sled dog race from

Anchorage to Nome. Several teams from Kotzebue annually compete in the highly competitive Iditarod and other races in the state and Canada. A couple of local teams are consistently among the top finishers of the Iditarod.

Occasionally, winter visitors have arrived by dog team from communities located off the Dalton Highway, or the “haul road” as it is known in Alaska, which leads to oil-famous Prudhoe Bay on the North Slope. Others have come by snow machine from the community of Talkeetna, seasonal jump-off point for Mt. McKinley climbers, just off the Parks Highway connecting Anchorage and Fairbanks.

In late winter/early spring of 2007, an ice road was built from Kotzebue to Noorvik and Kiana on the Kobuk River, about 40 and 60 miles away respectively. While ice roads are common in the Bethel area of western Alaska and on the North Slope, they have not been built from Kotzebue on a regular basis in many years. The right combination of weather, ice conditions and funding has to be in place.

In addition to Kotzebue, ten much smaller villages ranging in population from 100 to over 900 make up the borough. Its easternmost villages, Ambler, Shungnak and Kobuk, are located along the upper Kobuk River entering Athabaskan country and are actually closer to the Interior Alaska city of Fairbanks than Kotzebue. To the southeast, over 500 miles of virtually roadless wild lands separate Kotzebue from Anchorage, the largest city in Alaska. Because of the many and close interrelationships between Kotzebue and the villages, it is difficult to discuss economic, social and environmental topics related to Kotzebue without acknowledging to some degree, impacts throughout the region.

2.1 Economy and Culture

Archaeological evidence indicates the Iñupiat, the original people of this land, have been around for thousands of years. They led a nomadic way of life, following the migration of fish, marine mammals and game, and lived off the land. The indigenous people would also migrate from traditional seasonal settlements along the coastal areas and rivers and converge annually on the Kotzebue Sound, at the confluence of the large river systems of the Kobuk, Noatak and Selawik.

There, for several weeks during the summer months the people would arrive in groups to Sesualik on the northern shore of the sound, about 13 miles northwest of Kotzebue. Camps would be set up by tribal affiliation (Burch 1998). Beluga and seal would be hunted. Fish would be caught, cut and dried.

At the height of summer, when all the groups had arrived, a lively *qat̃ut* or trade fair would take place among salt water, near salt water and river people. Relatives and old friends would be reunited, news of the past year shared. New relationships would be forged. There would be dancing and games. Seal oil and whale meat from the coast would be traded for moose meat, hide and sinew and birch bark.

As summer waned, the groups would begin to depart. Laden with replenished food stores and newly traded goods they would make the journey back to fall camps, then winter, and finally spring and summer camps, completing the migration circle in the region (Burch 1998).

By the late 1800s, the trade fair had moved across the sound to Qikiktagruk. There the water was apparently deeper and easier for a variety of vessels to access, in particular the commercial whalers and other American vessels that had begun to "visit the region, recruit labor, and trade" (Kurtz n.d.:7). Quaker missionaries had also arrived in the community near the end of the century. They renamed the community "Kotzebue" after the German explorer who had come to the area in 1816. As a base for the Quaker church and schools, Kotzebue's role as transportation and trading hub was further strengthened. This distinction was sealed when the "first permanent trading post was established a few years after" the turn of the century, in the 1900s (Kurtz n.d.:7).

The Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED) defines "rural" as "a community of 6,500 or less not connected by road or rail to Anchorage or Fairbanks or with a population of 1,600 or less that is connected by road or rail to Anchorage or Fairbanks" (McDowell Group 2006a:2). Kotzebue today, with a population of about 3,200 and not connected by road to anywhere, falls under this definition.

Just as the state of Alaska is extremely dependent on the oil industry for a significant majority of its operating budget, the borough is equally highly dependent on the mining industry. The local cash economy is largely dependent on government and health service jobs, and revenue from large-scale mining in the region.

Through PILT or “payment in lieu of taxes” the majority of funding to operate the regional government comes from Red Dog mine, the world’s largest producer of zinc and copper. Surrounded by national parks, preserves, and wildlife refuges, the borough receives a smaller amount of PILT revenue from the federal government. Through this mechanism, the federal government pays the borough for lands that cannot be commercially developed due to their designation as national park, preserve, and other protected public lands.

The creation of the home rule borough in 1986 was done mainly to keep a large portion of mining revenues in the region to build new schools in Kotzebue and the villages. Mining revenues continue to support new construction in the school district and ongoing operations. Much larger portions of the revenue go to the State of Alaska and NANA Regional Corporation, the landowner.

Operated by Teck Cominco of Canada, the mine is the most profitable subsidiary of NANA, the Native Regional Corporation for the Northwest Arctic. The corporation is one of twelve in the state, formed as part of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971. Most of the indigenous people here are registered under NANA and are shareholders of the corporation. NANA makes an effort to hire its shareholders for Red Dog jobs and usually maintains about a 50% shareholder employment rate. Additionally, NANA owns a number of profitable subsidiaries worldwide. Profits from Red Dog and other subsidiaries translate to annual shareholder dividend checks.

In 2007, record revenues through Red Dog mine generated a combined average of over two thousand dollars in dividends per shareholder. Recent Alaska Permanent Fund dividends have well exceeded one thousand dollars per eligible Alaskan. The

2008 dividend amount was expected to rise above two thousand dollars,. For a family of five, annual dividend checks represent a significant portion of household income.

Unfortunately, there is a lot of economic leakage in Kotzebue and the region. Lacking a strong local economy, the majority of income received does not stay in the village or the region very long. Much of it is spent in the town's main grocery and "department" store whose headquarters are in Anchorage; for imported gasoline and heating fuel; for construction materials and other hardware; and for mail order shopping for groceries and other consumer goods.

The largest employer in the region is Maniilaq Association, the regional tribal health consortium. Maniilaq operates a relatively large medical clinic in Kotzebue and small clinics in all the regional villages. They also offer a wide range of social services, and environmental and public health related services and programs. One such program, which emphasizes the importance of traditional Native foods and is very much a reflection of traditional Iñupiaq culture, employs staff who hunt and fish to help ensure that elders have access to traditional foods, for example, caribou, fish, and seal meat.

Government and schools are the next largest employers. Kotzebue hosts the city of Kotzebue, the Native Village of Kotzebue, the NWAB, the NWAB School District, and Chukchi College, the local branch of the University of Alaska Fairbanks. There are also offices here for the public and Native land managers: NANA Regional Corporation, Alaska Fish & Game, National Park Service (NPS), Selawik National Wildlife Refuge, and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Support services include two grocery stores—one is part of a rural Alaska grocery chain based in Anchorage. The other, Rotman's Store, is a local mom & pop grocery store which has been in Kotzebue for generations. They also sell animal skins, furs, reindeer meat and "Qikiktigruk" and "Kotzebue" souvenir t-shirts. There is also a commercial bank with the only ATM in the region. It used to be an Alaska business but was bought out by Wells Fargo sometime after 2002. Two restaurants, the hospital cafeteria, and three take-out food businesses offer alternative dining options. There are also fuel, transportation, seasonal construction, and related services companies.

Military presence during the WWII years greatly expanded and improved the Kotzebue airport and led to the establishment of regular air carrier service to Kotzebue. It was in large part due to this upgraded airport that commercial tourism was able to take a foothold in Kotzebue after WWII. Apart that, few signs of the military were left after the close of the “White Alice” site in 1986. However, the military still owned a large tract of coastal land outside of town. On it sat the military remnant nicknamed the “golf ball.”

As part of the former U.S. Air Force base and White Alice Communications site, the huge “golf ball” south of town was visible for miles across the tundra and Sound. When the military was making plans a few years ago to dismantle the huge white multi-faceted sphere, local people expressed great concern and asked the military to leave the golf ball in place. Many residents were boat owners and pilots. They depended on the prominent, large white object as a navigational aid. The military agreed and the local landmark remained, still marking the former “base road” to the beach.

Apart from industrial mining, among the few activities which use local resources to generate “export” income are commercial fishing, artwork, and tourism. The commercial salmon fishery experienced a major downturn similar to the rest of the State of Alaska in the 1990s. Here, the local fishery closed down. However, after several years, in 2005 the borough assisted a small co-op in restarting commercial fishing. With low salmon prices and skyrocketing fuel costs, the co-op struggles to earn a profit.

The only art center in the region, Sulianich sells decorative and utilitarian artwork made by local residents. It is managed by NWAB staff. Many items are made of sealskin, fur, ivory tusk, baleen, birch bark, whale bone, caribou bone, caribou skin, and even prehistoric woolly mammoth. An artist workshop is located in the facility. Occasionally, classes are offered in drum making, knife making, skin sewing, and *atikluk* sewing. Sulianich is not far from the airport, across from the old NANA museum, and next to the sled dog lot of a famous local dog musher.

An *atikluk* is the traditional hooded garment with front pockets worn by many Iñupiat women. Throughout Alaska this garment is more commonly known as a

“kuspuk.” There are a number of styles and designs, some of which are unique to a particular village. Rotman’s store, near the post office, also sells *atikluks* and a few fur parkas, the traditional *atikluk*-style, fur-trimmed winter coat still worn by many women and young girls here, both Native and non-Native. Wearing a parka is not only a practical matter in the arctic winter, but also a source of pride for the wearer and for the seamstress. If one is interested in an additional selection of traditional clothing or artwork, one might be directed to the seamstress or artist themselves.

Commercial tourism has been a part of Kotzebue history and economy since 1946, right after WWII. (Kurtz n.d.). Very little remains of the tourism heyday. One remnant is the Nullagvik, the only “real” hotel in town. Another remnant of past tourism is LaVonne’s Fish Camp which has been in operation for over 30 years.

The Nullagvik is booked fairly regularly throughout the year with visiting professionals and village residents in town for trainings, meetings, and medical reasons. There is room for competition. Today some enterprising individuals are offering tourism or visitor related services. Some residents have converted part of their home or an existing building into guest lodging. A hotel room in summer 2008 is about \$230, whereas a guesthouse room is about \$100, although the quality and cleanliness of the latter can vary. Other residents take visitors upriver by boat or rent out camping, rafting, kayaking and related equipment.

“Subsistence” is a word commonly used when discussing the economic and cultural environment of indigenous Alaskans. The term is generally recognized in Alaska as the Native practice of living off the land. For many Native people in rural Alaska, it traditionally defined the ancient way of life in which everything, including spirituality, language, clothing, where one lived, type of lodging, social and economic status, recreation, relationships, and life or death, was determined by the forces of nature--from the weather and climate to what was harvested from the land (Jones 2006).

Today, though not as pervasive, subsistence is still an extremely important aspect of life and culture to the people (Jones 2006). It puts a significant amount of food on the table. During the past 20 years, subsistence harvests in northwest Alaska

communities have ranged from 347 pounds per person to 761 pounds per person, according to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Subsistence (Jim Magdanz, personal communication, November 6, 2008). Subsistence is also a pivotal factor in the discussion of Native rights, environmental protection, federal and state politics, land use and access, and economic development, in the Kotzebue region, and throughout Alaska.

The recent spike in fuel prices is already being reflected in spikes in food prices. Milk is \$10/gallon and more in the villages. Eggs are \$4 a dozen. Newcomers to the region quickly learn to appreciate the economic, spiritual and recreational value of berry picking, gathering native plants and consuming local fish and game. The importance of being able to harvest food from one's "backyard," and reduce reliance on expensive imported, commercially processed and packaged food, most of which is nutritionally sub-par to traditional native food, cannot be overstressed.

Over dependence on mining or any other industry subject to boom and bust cycles is never a good situation. When the cycle is in its boom phase, people and their leadership need to think forward and use the revenue to take steps to prepare for the next bust phase. There is a need to diversify the economy and pursue sustainable development. But instead of using revenue to wean themselves of dependency, they spend it. Kotzebue and the borough are in this situation.

The state of Alaska is a prime example of this failing as it has been in the boom and bust economy syndrome since gold rush days. Most recently, world oil prices that exceeded \$140 per barrel in July 2008 filled the state coffers to overflowing. However, the same high oil prices threaten to strangle the villages in our region and others in rural Alaska. Though the Alaska state governor returned a portion of that revenue to the people in the form of an "energy rebate" check of \$1,200 per resident, that will not help sustain village economies in the long run.

Since Kotzebue is not on the road system, transportation costs, including shipping or freight costs, are sometimes equal to or greater than the cost of the item being shipped. In late summer 2008, after the high priced fuel was barged in, gasoline in

Kotzebue is up to \$7.50 per gallon. In the villages it is up to \$9 per gallon—about the same price for a gallon of milk in Kotzebue. Higher fuel prices only exacerbate the already high cost of living in rural Alaska. Fuel translates to heat, electricity, freight, transportation, housing and food. Kotzebue needs to greatly decrease its reliance on imported fuel.

An energy summit was held in Kotzebue in summer 2008. Statewide efforts hope to share the wealth of state income from high oil prices with all Alaska residents. Kotzebue has a world renowned wind farm, the largest in Alaska. While positive, not until this winter will we know the true impact of the higher cost of fuel. At the same time, others note that with a high rate of diabetes and other health problems related to high consumption of soda pop and junk food and too little exercise, having to walk more and cut back on junk food are also benefits of this “crisis.”

2.2 People and Community

The population in Kotzebue today is over 76% Alaska Native and/or Native American (State of Alaska 2007). Most of the villages are about 95% or more Iñupiat Eskimo. Archeological evidence shows that indigenous people have inhabited this area for thousands of years. Through the nomadic nature of the people and centuries of seasonal reunions at Sesualik and Qikiktagruk trade fairs, and through boarding schools, many Native people of the region intermarry and are related to each other.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census data, per capita income in Kotzebue is just above \$18,000 and almost 37% of all adults are not in the workforce. Many residents receive some form of public assistance. Suicide, alcohol, and other social dysfunctions are serious, long-term challenges. In partnership with the North Slope Borough, our arctic neighbor to the north and home of the Prudhoe Bay oil fields, two initiatives, “Iñupiaq Values” and “Healthy Communities” have been developed to help address these issues.

Kotzebue still has the feel of a very safe community. Many people still walk everywhere; kids ride their bikes and play in the streets. People are very visible. In winter, people pull their kids and groceries by small sled. You know who your

neighbors are. People are friendly to strangers. If you walk down the beach in summer and someone is pulling in their fishnet, they are apt to offer you a fresh bright salmon. The same is true in winter when nets under the ice can be heavy with firm, sweet sheefish. If you are out snowmachining and happen to help someone pull in their net and pick off the sheefish, they might offer you your choice of a fresh one. They might even take a few extra seconds and gut and fillet the fish right there and save you the trouble later.

Ice fishing in spring is like a Sunday picnic in the park. Families and kids are all over the ice. You might be asked to watch someone's "*niksiq*" or be invited to try your hand at ice fishing. Or people offer you smelts or tomcod to take home, which also gives them an excuse to stay out fishing even longer.

Prior to the coming of missionaries and other western influence, wealth and status were determined by one's hunting success. This was demonstrated by sharing much of the bounty with the community, thus helping to redistribute wealth among the tribe. "Hunter success" and "sharing" are two of the stated Iñupiaq Values which helped the people survive thousands of years. They are still important values today.

Loss of culture, language and traditions are major concerns of the elders and leadership of the region. It is also felt that this loss of culture and Native pride contributes to the social problems experienced by the region. The Iñupiaq Values initiative is an effort to incorporate traditional Iñupiaq values into every aspect of community. Few people speak the Iñupiat language fluently and most of them are the elders. As they pass on, very few people are left who speak the language fluently, much less read and write it though many learn common Iñupiaq words and phrases from childhood. There is a strong movement to revive the language skills including the opening ten years ago of Nikiachuat, the Iñupiat language immersion pre-school. In 2007, an Iñupiat language CD set was released by the Rosetta-Stone company. Language courses are also offered through Chukchi College, the local branch of the University of Alaska of Fairbanks (UAF).

Along with other longtime residents who have chosen Kotzebue as their home, the people are the main reason one would remember a visit to this arctic town and region. While the scenery is spectacular, wildlife abundant, and the land still wild, unspoiled and seemingly endless, there are similarly breathtaking scenic landscapes around the world. But the mere mention of the word “Alaska” still evokes the myth, legend, and grandeur of the “last frontier” that continue to beckon to people everywhere. It is, however, the people of this land, Native and non-Native, who make Alaska the memorable experience it is for so many, and the people whose life story is the real stuff of myth and legends.

Chapter 3 Methodology

To address the research goals, both primary qualitative and secondary research methods were used. Primary research included interviews conducted during three visits to Kotzebue and through a number of telephone contacts over the course of approximately two years from 2002 through 2003. It also included a mini-ethnographic approach, just spending time to “be” in the community, observing, participating in local activities, getting a feel for the community as a non-resident, being aware of community dynamics, and also, inductive research as a resident of the community from 2004 to present. Secondary research included examination of Alaska visitor statistics, case studies of other communities similarly dealing with tourism, as well as selected tourism codes of conduct and guidelines.

Secondary research was done to fully understand the meaning of “sustainable tourism” and “ecotourism,” origins of the concepts, and the need for guidelines. While I was familiar with the terms, this research was also important to be able to better explain concepts to others. For example, many residents felt they knew about ecotourism. But in fact, they saw ecotourism as simply taking people out to see nature and wildlife, regardless of noise, air and water pollution, waste management, and lack of environmental best practices. More precise meaning of concepts would also be necessary to put forth valid guidance toward sustainable tourism in Kotzebue.

To learn how Kotzebue residents feel about tourism, past, present and future, their concerns, expectations and information gaps to be addressed, primary research through informal, guided interviews with them were conducted. Interviewees also included agency staff from public land managers such as National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; local governance staff, and small business owners. In general, most of the residents interviewed had been involved in tourism past or lived here during the tourism heydays, and some were still involved with tourism today.

They were asked the following questions:

1. How do you feel about tourism?

2. What was good about tourism?
3. What was not so good about tourism?
4. How do you see the future of tourism?
5. What could be done to improve tourism or to have better tourism?

Open question #1 yielded much information and easily led to questions 2 and 3, and insight on what worked right and what did not in tourism past. Question 3 raised an unexpected train of discussion and concern including how Front Street (Shore Avenue), which runs along the beach in front of town, had seen such an increase in traffic, mostly by bored teenagers and young adults cruising in their trucks and 4-wheelers, that most people had stopped “putting up food” (seal meat and fish) on the beach. The traffic stirred up dust and other debris which contaminated the racks of drying subsistence food. Paving of the road was in the works. Would that help bring back subsistence practice to the beach? No. The asphalt would make the ground too hot. Also, most residents had moved their subsistence activities further down the coast. Many lament, however, that hunting and related traditions of respect for the animals and land are being lost in the younger generations who are more interested in TV, electronic technology, and store bought food.

The first visit to Kotzebue in spring 2002, to attend a regional economic development gathering, was an excellent opportunity to gauge the local economic climate and dynamics between residents and leadership entities such as the NWAB which sponsored the gathering. It also afforded the opportunity to get a first-hand impression of the community and to “get a feel” for the community and determine if it might be a good “fit” for a tourism related research project.

Most of the people I met and spoke with there were interested in economic opportunity related to tourism and arts and crafts, and in many cases already were engaged in these activities. I also learned about a variety of low-impact tourism activities already taking place. It was encouraging to hear speakers, resident and non-resident, promote ecotourism and an awareness of how it can be appropriate here.

After the dust and excitement of departing visitors and presenters had settled, I made the decision to pursue a project in Kotzebue, related to tourism guidelines to maximize benefit to the community and minimize negative impacts. I also used this time and connections already made to conduct the first round of identifying stakeholders and key informants who referred me to others, introduce myself, establish relationships, and learn more about the history of and feelings about tourism in Kotzebue.

A second weeklong visit took place in July 2002 to experience the “summer tourist season” and conduct a basic assessment of tourism in Kotzebue. This visit was partially funded by the UAF Cooperative Extension department. Several nights were spent in a homestay situation. Two nights were spent out in the country—one night camping on a gravel bar up the Noatak and one night in a rustic cabin on a Native allotment. One night was also spent in the highest recommended bed & breakfast at the time, which is no longer in business since the owners moved away. During this summer visit, a number of informal, guided interviews were also conducted.

A third visit in mid-November 2002 was also partially funded by the UAF Cooperative Extension Services (CES) department to complete the tourism assessment. CES was looking into the prospects for tourism development in rural Alaska. This included conducting more on-site and telephone interviews and holding a public meeting in Kotzebue to discuss the same interview questions in an open group setting.

The announcement for the public meeting was broadcast on the local public radio station (KOTZ-AM) for 2 weeks prior and until the evening of the meeting. Additionally, those who had already been interviewed or with whom I had already spoken were personally invited to the informal public meeting held in the new borough assembly chambers in 2002. Over a dozen residents attended, a relatively good turnout, including then director of economic development for the NWAB. While he was supportive of tourism, others were openly skeptical or against it.

Another visit took place in the spring of 2003, to attend the local Kobuk 440 sled dog race, the last “big name” race of the season. The race typically draws a number

of racers and winners of the world renowned Iditarod sled dog race which would have finished just a few weeks earlier. This visit was to gauge winter tourism potential in the region through general conversation and informal interviews with residents to ask how more participants and visitors might affect the event itself, Kotzebue, and mostly, villages along the route who expend limited resources to celebrate, accommodate, and feed mushers, dogs and visitors passing through their small communities.

Inductive research, spending a length of time in the community, has been ongoing for the past several years as a resident since summer 2004. While interviews and surveys per se are not being conducted, talking with people in Kotzebue and the region, observing and taking part in community activities and events, observing community dynamics and day-to-day life in Kotzebue and the region, offer valuable insight. More importantly, as a “permanent” resident, approaching this topic is a real life issue impacting not just the research community, but *my* community, my quality of life, and my way of life.

During this time and sporadically during previous visits, primary research was conducted through informal interviews with those who came through town as a base for “wilderness” trips and visitors to the Sulianich art center. They were asked their reason for visiting and if they would return some other time, and why or why not. All were asked their impressions of Kotzebue as a place to visit.

In addition to primary research described above in 2002, secondary research on the history of tourism in Kotzebue was also conducted to compare with and put into context the oral information collected.

From a 2006 assessment of the region’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) related to sustainable tourism, selected items relevant to Kotzebue are highlighted and discussed.

Primary and secondary research was conducted on how other communities have managed or are managing tourism, in order to learn from the experience of others. Special attention was paid to communities with characteristics similar to those of Kotzebue, for example, communities in Alaska or the Arctic, those with a high

indigenous population but struggling to maintain their traditional culture and way of life, those with a weak local economy, and in a remote or difficult to access location. Primary research from 2002 through the present was done through guided informal interviews by telephone and email with informants involved in tourism in Anaktuvak Pass; birding in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta; and adventure tourism in Kaktovik in the North Slope Borough. Depending on the location or community, information examined included how the community got started in tourism; how they felt about tourism; benefits and challenges (any complaints or issues) of tourism; management tools and strategies used, if any; and prospects for the future of tourism.

Secondary research was done on Dig Afognak in Kodiak, communities in Arctic Canada, Svalbard (Norway), Antarctica, American Indian reservations, and indigenous communities in Panama, New Zealand, and Australia. Positive and negative impacts of tourism in these and other communities around the world were analyzed. Again, what measures have been taken to mitigate negative impacts and increase local benefits? Secondary research on effectiveness of guidelines, codes of conduct, and other controls to manage tourism yielded little information.

To learn what attracts visitors to Alaska, rural Alaska, and Kotzebue, and also what kind of visitors are attracted, secondary research was also conducted using the extensive data collected through the state's ongoing annual Alaska Visitor Statistics Program (AVSP) and various surveys and reports by the UAA Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER), as well as a variety of other literature. Internet resources were also studied. Random interviews were also conducted with independent travelers in Kotzebue. Though not of statistical value, this information further helped assess tourism potential in Kotzebue and the region.

Chapter 4 Tourism in Kotzebue

The earliest documented tourism in Alaska's northwest Arctic were the semi-nomadic (native) tribes traveling to follow their food source and meeting at *qatñut*, the much anticipated summer trade fair in Sesualik in Kotzebue Sound (Burch 1998). As Valene Smith noted, planning in advance for the annual event, "anyone who *could* go did so It was a 'summer vacation'" (1989:57). Though mainly for the practical, economic purpose of harvesting and putting up food, and trading goods, it was a social and spiritual event as well. It was a regional affair similar in some ways to the annual "state fair" or "county fair" common throughout the United States. Intertribal games, competition, dance, and other activities, made for a very festive reunion under the midnight sun. People interacted and took turns being audience and performers. They were not being paid to perform or entertain each other. The "profit" was the mutually beneficial, enjoyable experience of community. Festive as well as subsistence activities were all part of an "authentic" way of life that would later attract paying visitors.

Indigenous people and explorers traveled and lived in Qikiktagruk for centuries. But it was only since 1946 that Kotzebue began to experience commercial tourism, the business and activities related to people traveling for pleasure. Matthew Kurtz (n.d.) in "The Exhibition of Culture and Corporate Organization in Northwest Alaska" and Valene Smith (1969, 1989) each offered excellent insight through their research into the history of commercial tourism development in Kotzebue. Much of the early tourism information here is drawn from their work and corroborated by interviews with local residents. Smith's *Hosts and Guests* (1989) was often cited for its work in tourism impacts on indigenous people.

Kotzebue was a strategic U.S. military site even before statehood. By the end of WWII, Wien Airlines was scheduling weekly flights to Kotzebue. Thanks to the improved airport facilities and an enterprising "former military pilot and travel agent from Hollywood, California" named Chuck West (Kurtz n.d.: 5), the first tour group of ten passengers arrived in Kotzebue from Fairbanks in June 1946 to see "Eskimos 'doing

Eskimo things” (Smith 1989:63). According to West, this included seeing “fish drying on the racks . . . sled dogs tied to . . . primitive kennels, (and) . . . a beluga whale dragged up on shore.” West noted that it was “fascinating” for interior Alaska residents “who had never seen how coastal people lived” (Kurtz n.d.:5).

For many visitors to rural Alaska today, it is still a fascinating experience. Fish, especially bright red salmon, drying on racks is a fairly common image on many Alaska postcards and promotional literature. Yet, to be able to see the people today still engage in the centuries-old activity of putting up food as part of their way of life, and not part of a contrived demonstration for a tour package, is a very special experience. The “primitive kennels” still abound, though there are fewer sled dogs.

The beluga has become a charismatic “poster child” for wildlife conservation groups and a favorite attraction at marine parks and sealife aquariums. (A local woman admitted that when she visited Sea World and the beluga whale swam up to the glass, she involuntarily licked her lips.) But it is another centuries-old traditional food source that has not been completely replaced by hotdogs and hamburgers. For visitors, it is fascinating and perhaps a bit sobering to realize that Native people are also concerned about sustaining the beluga whale population, but for more pragmatic reasons.

Throughout the 1950s, tourism in Alaska was promoted through a major, nationwide marketing blitz including a number of travel articles in high profile magazines such as *National Geographic*, *Time*, and *Life*, and establishment of the Alaska Visitors Association (Kurtz n.d.). During this time there was also a strategic long-term media campaign to promote statehood for Alaska. Appearances by the charismatic Chester and Helen Seveck, the quintessential Iñupiat Eskimo couple, on TV, in print media, and national and international travel fairs, helped intensify people’s imagination, fascination, and curiosity about Alaska and the Eskimo.

The notoriety of the Kotzebue tour as an affordable way to see and experience the unique, exotic Eskimo way of life grew. Visitors could view native dance performances, ivory carving and skin sewing, visit a fish camp and reindeer corral, and shop. Ever increasing numbers of visitors were drawn to Kotzebue. (Kurtz n.d.)

By the late 1970s, still under ownership and management by non-local entities, Kotzebue tourism had reached 10,000 visitors each summer (Kurtz n.d.). That impressive draw was due in part to the modern new Living Museum of the Arctic built by NANA in 1976 after one of its earliest leaders visited and was inspired by the Polynesian Cultural Center in Hawaii.

Valene Smith visited in 1951, one of the earliest commercial tourists to Kotzebue. Probably the first researcher to study impacts of tourism on indigenous people, she focused on Kotzebue for her Ph.D. dissertation in 1969. Smith visited the new museum and declared it “one of the best in Arctic America” (Personal communication, March 12, 2007).

However, even booked at full capacity, the museum never made a profit. The overhead expenses of museums are generally such that they are rarely intended to operate on admission fees alone. Profits through other successful NANA businesses, most notably those serving the Prudhoe Bay oilfield development at that time, subsidized the cost to run the museum (Kurtz n.d.; John Schaeffer, personal communication, June 18, 2008). The museum would be instrumental in reviving native culture and tradition which had largely been erased by missionaries who had frowned upon the use of native language, dance and other cultural traditions.

Over twenty years had passed since the opening of the NANA Museum of the Arctic when the non-local owners of the ground tour operations filed for bankruptcy. Tourism was down 30% by 1988 when NANA bought the ground operations and renamed it Tour Arctic (Kurtz n.d.). For NANA, it offered further opportunity for job training for young Native people in Kotzebue. Typical throughout Alaska, and other tourist destinations throughout the country, tour jobs in Kotzebue were previously held by college kids looking for a summer job. They did not even live in Alaska. Now under NANA control, the museum and Tour Arctic hired young shareholders to “work with Native elders” (Kurtz n.d.:13), and gain experience meeting, greeting and interacting with visitors from “outside.”

A transition team was hired by NANA in 1987 to help the new subsidiary, Tour Arctic, move from outside, Lower 48 management, hire, and control to that of NANA shareholders. Kari Westlund, part of the transition team, described some of the cultural camp ground tour:

We set up a very large wall tent . . . where demonstrations for the group tours took place and camp youth would show traditional tools, identify furs, demonstrate techniques An Elder or two was typically present . . . but it was the young person's job to give the talk. At other times, the participating youth and Elders might go out on the tundra to talk about traditional tools and techniques as well as language and terms (Personal communication, October 9, 2008).

4.1 Tourism Downturn

NANA had considered purchasing the tourism ground operation about eight years before they actually did so. They had been deterred when the numbers indicated such a move would entail major financial risk for very little monetary return. Perhaps with the Red Dog mine opening that same year, and with other business ventures profiting well, NANA felt they could afford to purchase an operation that was losing money. Their main intent was not to make money, rather, to offer young shareholders employment opportunity that also encouraged more interest in learning their own cultural heritage.

Unfortunately, even after nearly five years with the transition team, it was too little time to adequately train enough shareholders and too little interest by the same, to seriously manage the tourism business (Westlund 2000). Juggling family, subsistence, and an intense summer tourism schedule was too demanding for most.

A large part of the tourism revenues came from Taiwanese tour groups. The fall of the Asian market might have contributed to the drop in tourist numbers. Also, the opening of the Alaska Native Heritage Center in Anchorage in 1999 might have begun to divert a large number of potential tourists to Kotzebue. Similar to the Polynesian Cultural Center in Hawaii, the Heritage Center offered visitors a glimpse into the

traditional life and culture of each of the main Native groups in Alaska, without ever having to travel beyond Anchorage.

The Iñupiat Heritage center in Barrow is located on the “north slope” of Alaska, home to the famous Prudhoe Bay oil fields and the northernmost point of Alaska and the United States. Barrow has more “extreme” appeal than Kotzebue. One can visit the “top of the world” and touch the Beaufort Sea and Arctic Ocean. Similar to *qat̃ut* in Qikiktagruk (Kotzebue), the Iñupiat of the North Slope Borough hold *nalukataq* or whaling festivals in June to celebrate the success of various whaling crews in their region (Brower and Hepa 1998).

Back in Kotzebue, tourist numbers and package tourism dwindled. More than thirty years after it opened, the Nullagvik was still the only hotel in town. Although a handful of smaller B&B or guesthouse type lodging have sprung up as less expensive alternatives to paying \$230 a night (in 2008) for adequate but tired, dimly lit hotel rooms with uncertain availability of hot water and heating or cooling systems.

However, the museum did not fare as well. Having always operated at a loss, there was less incentive than ever to invest in its maintenance and repair. Decades of lack of upkeep took its toll in broken sound and media systems; dank, musty interiors; worn out and outdated displays; and other deterioration. It had become a “detraction” for tourism and in the final years of Tour Arctic, tour groups were no longer taken to the museum. Its downfall symbolized the end of the tourism era in the community.

Although the museum was built as an amenity to enhance cultural tourism in Kotzebue and generate revenue, its main goal was to regain and strengthen Iñupiaq cultural knowledge, pride and practice—what can collectively be referred to as cultural heritage assets. By all accounts, it succeeded, for a time. But as McKercher and du Cros (2002) asserted, it is very difficult to strike a sustainable balance between cultural tourism and its goal of commercial profit, and cultural heritage management and its goal of cultural conservation. To its credit, NANA Regional Corporation was more focused on the museum’s cultural and social benefit to its people than its profits as a tourism business. Unfortunately, lack of the latter helped lead to the end of the Living Museum.

For Tour Arctic to profit monetarily required a much higher volume of tourists but Alaska Airlines, the only major passenger airline to Kotzebue, would not schedule another jet to help increase the numbers. Their main goal was to fill seats on the existing scheduled flights, not incur more cost risk by gambling on adding, and filling, another flight. Ironically, while airline access was vital to develop modern tourism, no matter how great the attraction, limiting that same access could stifle or kill tourism.

On NANA's part, as with the previous operators, in order to host as many groups as they did, the ground tour had gone from observing Native people going about their normal way of life to observing scheduled demonstrations of dance and selected aspects of Native way of life, including subsistence activities such as cutting up salmon and drying it on racks. Authenticity was diminished, as was perhaps enthusiasm by both "performers" and visitors.

Colt et al.'s study (2007) of southeast tourism noted that day trip excursions were more costly to operate than trips or activities involving longer stays. This fact would have further negatively impacted Tour Arctic revenue, which was mainly generated through day trips to Kotzebue.

In 2005, the Tour Arctic webpage announced that tours would return in 2006 with "new and exciting inter-active options." As of July 2008, the webpage had not been changed and except for the parked tour vans, there was no sign of Tour Arctic in Kotzebue.

The museum closed and was razed without fanfare in 2006. Yet, there was a certain sadness in seeing the heavy equipment and the large distinctive structure dismantled. It signaled the end of a tourism era in the community. But even with that and the suspension of Tour Arctic, tourism in Kotzebue was not dead.

4.2 Tourism Today

LaVonne's Fish Camp still hosts small, diverse groups of visitors each summer. Located along the beach several miles south of town, the camp has been in operation for over 30 years, since the time LaVonne was a public health nurse and traveled throughout the region. A number of young NANA shareholders were mentored by

LaVonne when they worked at her camp and attribute that experience to helping them develop self-confidence and a positive work ethic. Several simple plywood structures make up LaVonne's Camp, as it is known locally. A handful of guests stay in one of several plywood "cabins." There is a larger structure for group dining and gathering space where cultural demonstrations, storytelling and other activities take place. Elder women from town who do not have a skiff and net to seine for fish, come out to LaVonne's and use hers. In return, the still strong and animated *aanas* demonstrate and explain to guests how fish are caught, and the age old way to cut up, hang to dry and put away fish for winter. Guests are invited to participate in any part of the activity.

Some of the fish is cooked and sampled and the *aanas* keep the remaining catch. Sometimes on the town's only public radio station, LaVonne will ask if any *aanas* want to come out to camp. The elder grandmas also entertain guests and each other with storytelling. For this they are paid a small fee. If the weather is willing, guests can also take a boat ride upriver to see some of the country and visit another family camp.

LaVonne's Camp has welcomed a wide range of groups since the late 1970s, including those who came up as part of the early Kotzebue day tour package. The camp has evolved into a non-profit organization and offers affordable rates that attract small independent groups and others through Elder Hostel, the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS), a Grandparents/grandkids group, volunteers from a university in Oregon, and others. Though guests are not obviously "high end," they buy their share of artwork by local artists and are interested in any classes that might be offered at Sulianich. Guests visiting on July 4th are treated to the lively Kotzebue celebration complete with food, other vendor booths, Miss Arctic contests complete with modeling beautiful fur parkas and the popular snowmachine races on the lake.

Though LaVonne no longer lives in Kotzebue, she maintains many close ties with the community and still comes up every summer to open her camp. In addition to visitors from Outside, old and new friends in town are always welcome to stop by and visit.

In summer 2007, a German visitor to the Sulianich art center turned out to be a tour guide for small passenger cruise ships. The cruises covered a circular route in the Bering Strait to Chukchi Sea region, including stops at coastal communities such as Nome and Shishmaref, and whaling communities such as Point Hope, Point Lay, and Diomed. Neither Kotzebue nor any other coastal village in the Borough was a stop, even though all were in the same coastal region. The tour guide admitted their company had no idea what visitors could see or do in Kotzebue, much less in the region. Yet, shore excursions were once a large part of the tourism market in Kotzebue. Obviously interested in possibly expanding their tour route in the Northwest, the tour guide-tourist offered her contact information.

Sled dog races and snow machine races for all age groups still occur today, though with less frequency, prize money and fanfare than in the 1980s, when they drew large crowds, more visitors and large purses. Yet, in recent years, the major snowmachine races and the Kobuk 440 sled dog race seems to be growing in popularity. The racing season finishes around the time of Easter with a popular community-wide potluck to award prizes, honor mushers (and their dogs) and share memorable stories. It is humbling and inspiring to see mushers, men and women, in their 60s and still going strong.

Independent visitors and other travelers find their way to Kotzebue and float down the spectacular river systems in the region. Others arrive clutching an old copy of a guidebook listing a B&B or restaurant that no longer exists. But others have taken their place and locals are happy to direct the visitors. Still others use Kotzebue as a gateway to hike, raft or canoe the vast adjacent national park and preserve lands.

Surrounded by national parks, preserves, and wildlife refuges, there is strong potential for a revival of tourism in Kotzebue and the region. The Western Arctic Parklands office of the National Park Service (NPS) in Kotzebue is constructing the Northwest Arctic Heritage Center where the museum once stood. The presence of the new facility itself will attract avid park visitors who seek to visit all the nation's NPS visitor centers. Since Kotzebue lacks any similar tourist information center, the new

NPS center will also by default serve this purpose. Scheduled to officially open in 2010, the facility will house an office for NANA Regional Corporation, but beyond that, little is known about NANA plans related to tourism.

Based on an assessment of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) to sustainable tourism in the borough, compiled in 2006 (Alvite), selected items relevant to Kotzebue are discussed below.

4.3 Selected Challenges

A recent study by the Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage, on “Viable business enterprises for rural Alaska” (VIBES) found that among the biggest challenges for rural businesses were the need for more training in financial and business management for day-to-day operations, and learning about marketing, customer service, and dealing with employees (Haley et al. 2007). This was true for both current and prospective business owners.

Good help is hard to find. Many local people are not getting or keeping jobs. The necessary skills, experience or other capacity are lacking. Even if training is available, desire and motivation are lacking. There is a high turnover rate. Alcohol and other dysfunctions are among the most chronic impediments to sustainable economic development in the region. Those that do have the capacity and skills to pursue higher education or career advancement, often leave Kotzebue. Few return.

The “crab pot” mentality can be another challenge. When someone tries to move up (get out of the pot), others attempt to pull them back down. This might be due to resentment or envy, and it is unfortunate. There is anecdotal evidence that it has hampered small business development, including at least one potential nature based tourism business.

Other challenges inherent in living in remote Alaska include notoriously unpredictable weather and the high cost of utilities, fuel, freight and goods. This was also echoed in the VIBES study. In July 2008 the world market price for crude oil jumped to a record \$147 per barrel. Even though oil prices returned to pre-spike levels several months later, by then, fuel for most rural villages off the road system had

already been purchased and barged or flown to the villages, locking in the high price for the long winter. This precipitated a sharp rise in the number of students, and presumably their families, who left the rural school district, negatively impacting the NWAB school district budget and will surely impact the Kotzebue and village economy.

Land use is an important factor of the economy and way of life here, moreso since the coming of the white man and especially since ANCSA, which introduced the concept of Alaska Native allotments and other compensation as a major alternative to the system of American Indian reservations in the Lower 48. While subsistence rights are supposedly protected, ANCSA was still a way for the federal government to restrict traditional land access and use by indigenous people. In turn, visitors and non-Native residents need to do their homework and learn the law of the land regarding access and permitted use on public lands, NANA land, Native allotments, and other private land.

Due to misuse of NANA lands in past years, NANA has been broadcasting a public service announcement (PSA) on the local public radio station, KOTZ-AM, informing listeners about the need for permits, who must apply, when, and for what activity. Sport hunting is prohibited on all NANA lands and a land monitoring program is in place to address unauthorized use of NANA land.

Though access is not an issue in Kotzebue, too many tourists wandering around town is what made residents feel their privacy was being invaded, one of the most common complaints about early tourism in Kotzebue. Incidents of tourists peeking in the windows of private homes, taking pictures of residents without asking permission were documented early on by Valene Smith (1989) and widely retold. Even Pi-Sunyer in "The cultural costs of tourism" remarked that he would have no "privacy if (he) were an Eskimo butchering a seal behind (his) house when tourists were in town" (1982:9). As recently as 1999, the same invasive behavior occurred when uninvited cruise ship tourists landed in the small Southeast Alaska community of Tenakee Springs. Unlike the tolerant Eskimo of the past, the non-Native residents of this town very vocally expressed their anger and displeasure at this affront and intrusion (Lewan 1999).

Such intrusions are not unique to Kotzebue or Alaska but unfortunately too common worldwide, notably in rural and indigenous communities and can lead to local resentment of tourists (Adams 1990; Amador 1997; Browne and Nolan 1989; Dressler et al. 2001; Liu and Var 1986; Payne and Dimanche 1996; Wood 1999).

Congestion or competition for use of facilities, services or recreational areas can also make locals feel resentful. This gets worse on open land, such as on the coast, in berry picking areas, waterways, etc. Being physically and spiritually close to the land is one of the main reasons people value living in rural Alaska and Kotzebue. It is also one of the main reasons that sport hunting is viewed by many locals with such animosity.

4.3.1 Sport Hunting

The region experiences a much higher number of visitors in September and October in the form of sport hunters, guides and transporters. This is evidenced by the seeming army of "camo" that floods Kotzebue and the villages, and the numbers of camo-clad hunters crowding Sulianjich, the Borough sponsored art center and gift shop, to buy souvenirs or perhaps a gift to appease the wife back home.

Unfortunately, this type of visitor can be and has been unwittingly the source of much local conflict and resentment. Two of the big issues have been over resident and non-resident land use, specifically for hunting; and mishandling and wasting game meat. After years of increasing discontent from local residents, there has been an equal increase in multi-agency and public discussion and collaboration.

The Borough, BLM, National Park Service, Selawik National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska State Fish & Game, NANA, and others recently partnered to identify an extensive list of do's and don'ts for hunting to help diffuse some of the sport hunter and related user conflict issues. In 2007, this list was used to create a highly visible wall poster which was widely distributed in town, containing hunting regulations and best practices, especially related to clean up of hunting camps and proper handling of meat. The effectiveness of these guidelines still remains to be seen but there is definitely more awareness of the issues by all concerned.

Most sport hunters wanted only the antlers or head of the moose or caribou. One of the main complaints by local residents was that meat was too often discovered spoiled in town or left in the field. This was highly offensive to the local residents who hunted mainly for the meat (and delicacies of the head such as the tongue). For the 2008 hunting season, typically the month of September, a simple plan was devised to distribute to the community game meat brought back to town by non-local hunters. A PSA aired on the KOTZ-AM throughout the late summer and early fall of 2008 indicated the station would serve as contact information clearinghouse for those who had meat to give away and those who wanted it. The PSA included simple guidelines on documenting the transaction and important regulations and fines for dealing with spoiled meat “even if you just give it to your dogs” (Jim Dau, Alaska Fish & Game, PSA, summer/fall 2008).

On the other side of the discussion, sport hunters expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of local facilities to store meat, process meat, pack and ship antlers, indicating that such lack might discourage them and other sport hunters from returning. Offering such services, they suggested, would make someone (local) money and bring in more sport hunters and related business. They apparently did not realize that locals made very little profit, if any, from sport hunting. The locals for their part, took in this information with great interest, but *not* for the reason that sport hunters would like to think.

Yet, a few residents have started their own business to earn income from the sport hunting market. For example, one bed & breakfast owner likes sport hunters—it is good for business and fills up the B&B. Another local resident is a licensed guide and Iñupiat, whose family also hosts sport hunters at their camp.

Typically, as these sport hunters are also visitors to the area, not surprisingly, they prefer a local, or better, a Native resident for their guide. It offers visiting hunters a more enriching experience, getting to know someone who lives in the area, knows the land, the culture, has a long history in the region, and who, like many who live here, has fascinating stories to share. At the same time, this local family uses this opportunity to increase their guests’ understanding of the local culture and the feelings and concerns

regarding traditional hunting, land use, and the challenges of living in bush Alaska. Visiting hunters seem to truly appreciate this awareness and insight.

But such enterprising locals also tolerate some neighbors' criticism for doing business with sport hunters. In addition to the reputedly rigorous process to become licensed, potential local guides can be deterred by enough residents who are very vocal in their opposition to sport hunters in the region. There is no law to prevent sport hunters from getting off the plane in Kotzebue. The sport hunting industry is very lucrative in the state and for that, strongly supported by the State Board of Fish and Game. A sport hunter spends \$8,000 on average to hunt in this region. Most of that is already going to the transporters and guides, many who do not live here but set up shop in Kotzebue for the fall hunting season. The hunters come with money to spend. If locals are not prepared to capture some of that potential income, others from outside are, and will continue to do so.

While the sport hunting conflicts are far from being resolved, since dialog, listening and collaboration began, the situation appears to be improving. Hunters, like most people, want to feel welcome, or at least, not unwelcome in a place. This mirrors a similar feeling by tourists and other visitors. This situation also mirrors a similar ambivalence by the community between welcoming "visitors" and being wary of them.

Finally, there is no plan to create and implement a holistic approach to address the issues and guide the community toward a viable, sustainable form of tourism. There is also no local entity to take the lead to do so. As with sport hunting today and tourism in the past, this opens the community to the risk of outsiders--instead of locals--again controlling tourism here, or taking advantage of the opportunities here, and taking the profits with them when they leave.

Many of the challenges listed here threaten or weaken prospects of both long-term community and economic development. The process toward, as well as the realization of sustainable tourism itself, could well be part of the solution to these challenges.

4.4 Selected Strengths

The strong social network is a foundational strength for the community as well as for sustainable tourism. As described in chapter 2, the community overview, people in town tend to help each other and look out for each other. If a snow machine or skier or dog team is stopped out on the trail, others will slow down or stop to check on you. A friendly wave signals that all is well. There is a volunteer search and rescue department and volunteer fire department. One never knows when someone you help might be the one who helps you when you need it. Potlucks, many featuring native food such as *ugruk* (bearded seal), different types of *muktuk* and fish, caribou and moose, dried and prepared in a variety of ways, and seal oil for dipping, abound for every imaginable occasion and most are open to the community.

People still practice many subsistence activities such as ice fishing with net or hook, seal hunting, hunting moose, caribou and other game, putting up fish, meat, berries, and greens, cutting animal skins, and making seal oil. Many women are still known for their expertise in making traditional native clothing such as *atikluks*, fur parkas, fur mittens, fur hats and fur and skin mukluks. The quality of an item, and its price, can be gauged by the seamstress. Some of the finest parkas endure for decades.

Many residents have retained and still use traditional knowledge, for example, harvesting, using, and storing edible and medicinal plants; building emergency winter shelter; processing meat and fish; and reading the water and sky conditions, including being able to detect changes due to global climate change. Many still know the lay of the land and can navigate by it. However, increased reliance on marked trails, modern GPS devices, and cell phones does threaten the loss of this traditional knowledge.

Remote, largely undeveloped, open wild lands valued by residents are also what attract many visitors (Colt et al. 2007; Hall and Johnston 1995; McDowell 2004, 2006a and 2006b; Weaver 2001). There is also abundant and diverse vegetation, wildlife, terrain, and waterways. One can still drink directly from many rivers and streams in this region.

Suliaŋich art center, LaVonne's Camp, and the Kobuk 440 are additional strengths for sustainable tourism that also strengthen the community in general. Revival in recent years of the traditional *qatŋut* trade fair, held in conjunction with the already very popular local Fourth of July celebration, is a special strength in that it harks back to a centuries-old traditional Iñupiaq event that brought together tribes from far and wide in what could arguably be considered the earliest form of tourism in the region, one that might also be sustainable.

Chapter 5 Sustainable Tourism

What is sustainable tourism? As stated before, sustainable tourism as a form of sustainable development meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Similar to "ecotourism," the term "sustainable" has become a common buzz word thrown around to connote something that is supposed to be "good for the environment" or just good in general. Consider that recent local media promoted the development of "sustainable mining."

Whether it is actually good or not is debatable and dependent on many factors. However, when riding a loud, obnoxious airboat spewing toxic exhaust fumes as it hurtles through the Everglades sending wildlife in its path scurrying out of the way in fear, is touted as an "eco-tour", this use and misuse of terms begs for a few definitions.

Several common terms related to or implying "sustainable tourism" are ecotourism, alternative tourism, adventure tourism, responsible tourism, nature-based tourism, and cultural tourism. There are a myriad of definitions and interpretations of each (Boo 1990; Bosselman et al. 1999; Hundloe 2002a and 2002b; Johnson 2002; Johnston 1990; Lane 1994; Weaver 2001).

"Ecotourism" is probably the most recognized term to describe the antithesis of commercial mass tourism, and which implies "good" tourism. The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines ecotourism as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people" (Wood 1999:25). Weaver (2001) in *Ecotourism* does an excellent job of analyzing and explaining the concept, related terms, nuances and permutations of interpretation, planning and implementation. For the purpose of this research, "ecotourism" is a form of alternative, sustainable tourism, adhering to the TIES definition above.

"Alternative tourism" is understood here as Weaver defines it, as an alternative to mass commercial tourism which is perceived as "bad" tourism, although it does not imply sustainable. Mountain biking as adventure tourism is a form of alternative

tourism but if uncontrolled and negatively affecting nearby wildlife or the environment, cannot be sustainable. But implementing a "hardening" technique, for example, by identifying and purposely sacrificing an amount of outdoor trail acceptable to all, not critical habitat, for this activity, could help make mountain biking a sustainable activity. It would still need to meet economic and social responsibility criteria to be considered truly sustainable.

Along the same lines, "nature-based" or "nature tourism" and "culture-based" or "cultural tourism" can be equally harmful to the natural environment or the affected culture and community if not carried out in a sustainable manner as described earlier.

When people in Kotzebue who are interested in tourism, talk of potential tourism and recall past tourism experience, they think instead of river trips and visits to "camp." They nod knowingly that "ecotourism" is the better way to go. And it could be (McIntosh 1999). However, without proper awareness of the principles of true ecotourism and all the responsibility that it encompasses, they risk making the same mistake as one governing body in the 1990s.

Several years after promoting ecotourism development, the Philippine government *redefined* ecotourism to mean activity that was "low-impact, environmentally sound and . . . yield(ed) socio-economic benefits to the concerned community" (Alejandrino 2002:176). That this was not part of the original definition effectively demonstrates the strong consumer appeal of the ecotourism label even without fully understanding the scope of the concept.

Alejandrino explains, is that while "ecotourism may be considered the most sustainable form of tourism, it exposes natural ecosystems to . . . negative impacts (such as) trail erosion and garbage accumulation," harm to wildlife and habitat, little economic gain, and undesirable cultural impacts on indigenous people (2002:182). He cites the very impacts that gave rise to the need for alternatives such as ecotourism. He concludes that if these negatives could be "successfully addressed," then ecotourism would be a great tool toward sustainable development. What he and many others who

espouse the benefits of ecotourism miss is that “true” ecotourism is more than just nature based activities.

It is this kind of misguided thinking and behavior that disillusion many who traveled with a conscience, unwittingly “loving places to death.” “Ecotourism” seemed to be the answer to assuage the responsible traveler’s conscience. It could also be a way of “green-washing” plain, old-fashioned profit-driven mass tourism. But travelers are becoming increasingly more savvy and responsible.

The power of green marketing is growing. The famed Marriott hotels are appealing to an environmentally conscious market by greening their operations: Spudware--potato starch disposable tableware; organic flowers; reducing fuel and water consumption; installing solar power; and expanding reduce, reuse, and recycle programs already in 90% of their hotels. They are even partnering with Conservation International and the Audubon Society, both high profile environmental groups. Not only does this help increase market share, it improves the triple bottom line--reaping economic benefits (reducing costs) and also social and environmental benefits.

That the definition of sustainable development comes through the UN recognizes the global nature of the issue. We are all interconnected; what happens in one part of the world will and does ultimately impact the rest of the world. The UN Brundtland report, which defines sustainable development, affirmed the global concern “about the accelerating deterioration of the human environment and natural resources” (UNWCED website) due to apparently unsustainable development. Since then, it has been extensively documented that many cultures, especially indigenous cultures, are being negatively impacted and even destroyed due to unsustainable development (Hawken et al. 1999; Korten 1990; McLaren 1998, 1999; Roy 1999).

For example, logging and fishing can be sustainable economic practices since trees and fish are renewable resources. But over logging or over fishing, rampant taking of too much, too often, in one location, is unsustainable, often leading to environmental and ecological damage, threatening the future of the trees or fish, and each respective

industry. This also negatively impacts the future of indigenous and other communities whose survival depends on healthy ecosystems.

However, the need for money and jobs is the main reason anyone even thinks of getting into tourism in the first place. Many Southeast Alaska communities are turning to or have turned to tourism when their traditional logging or fishing industry declined or ended, was not sustainable (Colt et al. 2007; Dugan et al. 2006). Many individuals and “bush” Alaska communities are turning to tourism to meet the growing number of visitors seeking “the real Alaska” (McDowell 2006a and 2006b; First Alaskans 2001). But if money and jobs override all else, tourism, like over logging or over fishing, can quickly become unsustainable.

Sustainable tourism as a form of sustainable development should be conscientious and responsible on a social/cultural, economic, and ecological level. This term often connotes, as it does in this research, activity or development that consciously protects the natural and human environment, long-term, indefinitely, to ensure the quantity and quality of resources are intact for future generations.

Tourism, in its most basic form, is a profit-driven industry. As such, why should the tourism industry not want to maximize its profits by any means? Do we expect any less of the mining, oil, or manufacturing industry? At the same time, thanks to guidelines, regulations, and a more environmentally aware public, profit drive can be expected to also include environmental and social responsibility.

Until irresponsible practices resulted in egregious environmental pollution and degradation, human suffering, and loss of life and property, oil, mining, and other resource extraction industries were doing business as usual. A public outcry prompted monitoring and regulation by the federal government. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Clean Water Act did not come about due to the conscience and ethics of big industry to “do the right thing” for society and the environment.

The mega cruise ships carrying thousands of passengers all summer long and accounting for the majority of tourism increase in Alaska, are all registered overseas to avoid having to adhere to Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards for

pollution prevention and environment protection. David Johnson cites waste impacts from cruise ships that include “oils, garbage, sewage, plastics, and hazardous substances” such as chemicals and detergents (2002:263). The International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL Protocol) addresses the responsible management of these wastes. However, it is hard to enforce (Marsh and Staple 1995). Johnson also documents the need for strong vigilance by popular destination communities to ensure environmental compliance.

One would think that an industry that depends so much on the resources of beautiful landscapes and a “pristine” environment to attract its customers would care about sustaining those resources. But that is not the case when profits and large profit margins drive a business and there are no watchdogs looking out for the people and environment being affected.

Inuit-owned Makivik Corporation might be onto sustainable cruises. Their Cruise North small boat expeditions through Nunavut and northern Quebec visit isolated Inuit villages as ice and weather conditions permit. Inuit are employed; villages sell their artwork; a landing fee benefits local villages; and they seek to partner with other Inuit region leaders. They understand the need for more planning to expand community benefits and “help protect sensitive wildlife and heritage areas” (CBC News 2007a and 2007b).

The Alaska Tourism Industry Association (ATIA) is contracted by the State to promote tourism in Alaska using ads rich with dramatic scenery, wildlife, and Native culture. Heard recently on Alaska Public Radio Network (APRN), ATIA states it had “matured as an organization” and acknowledged the need to look beyond marketing and increase “emphasis on care of the environment . . . culture . . . and unique quality of life” as all visitors deserve a “quality experience.” (October 9, 2008). Though the State program Developing Alaska Rural Tourism (DART) offers training in rural Alaska tourism and technical assistance in marketing, product development, partnerships and funding, there is no official State plan for tourism development.

Partnership with the Alaska Wilderness, Recreation and Tourism Association (AWRTA), a nature-based trade organization of businesses that promote and implement environmental conservation and protection., would benefit planning for statewide tourism by going beyond marketing to implement sustainable tourism. AWRTA was founded specifically in response to the disastrous Exxon Valdez oil spill of 1989 which was massively harmful or deadly to marine life, waterfowl, habitat, and ecosystems. It also ruined many businesses that depended on those living resources.

So, how does one measure sustainability? That is part of the problem. What constitutes a sustainable level of development is difficult to measure. There is no consistent measuring tool. Often it is a qualitative measure rather than one based on hard science. One way might be the "Natural Step" system of conducting business. The Natural Step was developed precisely because many people supported the concept of sustainable development but no one really knew what it meant or how to implement it. As the website for Business and Sustainable Development explains, "(t)he Natural Step model is a simple, scientifically based approach to sustainable development that encourages environmental systems thinking within corporations, governments and academic institutions" (n.d.).

This thinking requires a paradigm shift. For example, based on the science of environmental systems, in nature there is no waste. All energy and materials expended, normally considered waste, become instead food or the raw material for another part of the natural system. It is not a cradle-to-grave system, i.e., production to dump, rather, cradle-to-cradle. In keeping with traditional indigenous world view, everything is interconnected, cyclical, a full circle of development. This helps ensure sustainability.

Another important principle of the Natural Step applicable to sustainable tourism is that "humanity cannot tolerate continual degradation of the environment." In more common language, if you foul your nest you cannot live in it anymore. People, tourists, do not pay to see ugly or littered places. Most people do not want to live in such places.. The annual spring cleanup in Kotzebue is a very popular activity. Unfortunately, tourism, more people and goods, creates more trash and litter, and

burdens a local or non-existent rural waste management system (Johnston and Madunic 1995; Liu and Var 1986).

Even Steven Covey in his best selling “7 Habits of Highly Effective People,” recognizes the essential “P/PC Balance.” Using the fable of the goose that lays the golden eggs, Covey emphasizes that to ensure production (P) of what we want (the golden eggs), we have to take care of the production capability (PC), the goose or “the ability or asset that produces the golden eggs” (1989:54). He contends this balance is a “natural law” that is often broken in the short-sighted pursuit of quick, short-term gains. This is the problem of mass, commercial tourism, such as the cruise ship scenario above which breaks natural law and threatens to kill the golden goose.

In sustainable tourism in Alaska, the golden goose includes the expanse of unspoiled wild lands, clean water, abundant fish and wildlife, and the residents who are an intrinsic part of the landscape. That attracts paying visitors, the golden eggs. For residents for whom the golden eggs are where they live, taking care of the golden eggs simultaneously takes care of the golden goose.

As per Snyder and Stonehouse, “mass commercial tourism” here means activity involving groups of travelers who “desire to experience beautiful sights, new territories and different cultures while traveling comfortably and safely” (2007:52). While that sounds harmless enough, it is when very little or no thought is given to the appropriateness of group size, frequency and timing of group visits, what sights and cultures are experienced and how, and how all these impact affected communities, that mass tourism becomes the bad guy, and the need for guidelines for sustainable tourism arises.

Whether it is tourism or another activity, good stewardship and respect for the natural environment are critical factors in any type of sustainable development. Littering, fuel, oil and other spills or leaks, improper waste disposal, and other degradation are unacceptable. We have to take care of that which takes care of us, the “producers” of all life as we know it, in order to sustain life as we know it.

There are no hard and fast rules by which to measure sustainability, such as there are for say, air and water quality. Yet, knowing what is valued and how much change or degradation is acceptable to the affected population, whether human or other species, might be the most practical way to gauge how sustainable is an activity such as tourism. In addition, as many definitions that exist for sustainable and ecotourism, there are equally numerous principles, guidelines and other tools to achieve either.

Chapter 6 Principles and Guidelines

So, why develop guidelines? Why should local people care about tourism and sustainable tourism? Whether people/visitors come here or not? Tourism is already happening here and despite the current global economic downturn, visitors will continue to come. Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world, employing over 100 million people and generating hundreds of millions of dollars in government tax revenues (Hundloe 2002a). Both ecotourism and polar tourism are fast growing sectors within the industry (Snyder and Stonehouse 2007). Though management plans for public lands address land use, access and protection, they are not community tourism plans. Guidelines offer communities direction in how to better realize potential benefits of tourism and avoid the nightmare of unplanned, unguided tourism that make many residents ambivalent about its return to their backyard.

A wealth of research has been and continues to be done on guidelines and regulations to manage tourism, the need for and the challenge of appropriateness, implementation, and mostly their effectiveness (Amador 1997; Bosselman et al. 1999; Fleckenstein 1999; Getz 1983; Johnston 1997, 1998; Malloy and Fennell 1998; Mason 1994; Mason 1997; Michaud 1991; Payne and Dimanche 1996). As many as there are opportunities and benefits to be realized through tourism, there are equally numerous threats if not planned and implemented in a sustainable manner. Short of regulations and laws, principles and guidelines for sustainability can help protect natural “resources” that might be impacted—the ecology, cultural assets, people, and the community—that also form the basis for sustainable tourism, while offering guidance in how to maintain that balance between using a resource and protecting it.

Among the myriad of guidelines, principles, and codes of conduct toward sustainable tourism, a few stand out relevant to the Arctic in general and Alaska and Kotzebue in particular, especially since arctic tourism is rapidly increasing (Notzke 1999; Snyder and Stonehouse 2007; Viken and Jorgensen 1998). One is the Sustainable Model for Arctic Region Tourism or SMART, a program developed to promote

sustainable tourism in the Arctic. It is an official program of the Sustainable Development Working Group of the Arctic Council and the Northern Forum. Participants include a number of trade, non-governmental, governmental, and environmental entities, including AWRTA, the Alaska trade association of conservation-based businesses. SMART also furthers the efforts of the WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) Arctic Programme “Linking Tourism and Conservation.” Similar to all guidelines and other efforts to promote sustainability, SMART Principles (Table 1) are based on social, cultural, economic and environmental responsibility.

Table 1. Sustainable Arctic Tourism Principles.
(Source: Sustainable Arctic Tourism Website.)

Sustainable Arctic Tourism Principles
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supports the local economy 2. Operates environmental friendly 3. Supports the conservation of local nature 4. Respects and involves the local community 5. Ensures quality and safety in all business operations 6. Educates visitors about local nature and culture

Simultaneously, on a global level, the UN has been very active in advocating for sustainable tourism, proclaiming 2002 as the International Year for Ecotourism and charging its Commission on Sustainable Development to work toward sustainable tourism development. Through the UN Arctic Programme and in support of UN Agenda 21, the WWF initiated development of the UN Code of Conduct for Arctic Tourism. The ten underlying principles are listed in Table 2.

Both sets of guidelines are relevant and useful for the Arctic. Specific to Alaska, the AWRTA ecotourism guidelines speak directly to businesses and address the balance needed between protecting and sustaining environmental and cultural resources and economic growth.. The AWRTA website also offers a wealth of information for those

wishing to visit Alaska and do business with environmentally and culturally responsible businesses.

Table 2. Ten Principles for Arctic Tourism. (Source: UN Commission on Sustainable Development. 1999.)

Ten Principles for Arctic Tourism
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make Tourism and Conservation Compatible 2. Support the Preservation of Wilderness and Biodiversity 3. Use Natural Resources in a Sustainable Way 4. Minimize Consumption, Waste and Pollution 5. Respect Local Cultures 6. Respect Historic and Scientific Sites 7. Communities Should Benefit from Tourism 8. Trained Staff are the Key to Responsible Tourism 9. Tourism Should Educate about the Arctic Environment and Arctic Conservation 10. Follow Safety Rules

Building on above guidelines and "Sustainable Rural Tourism Strategies" (Lane 1994), sustainable tourism should specifically:

- sustain, and even strengthen, the culture and character of host communities
- sustain landscape and habitats, contributing to non-profits that benefit the local community and the environment
- sustain the rural and local economy, including helping it to diversify and be balanced, and not over dependent on tourism alone
- sustain for the long-term a viable tourism or visitor economy, including meeting the needs of visitors to make them feel welcome and satisfied with their visit
- sustain local control of and participation in the visitor economy

- meet community needs, reflect and honor community values

Using these guidelines, NANA tourism did many things right to sustain tourism. They had the best interest of the people at heart. Local hire seemed ideal to strengthen Inupiaq culture and tradition while helping people transition to a modern economy. It succeeded, especially among young shareholders, in renewing pride and interest in the language, traditional dance, hunting and gathering skills, and other cultural activities. The community felt more ownership and acceptance of tourism. It created a positive “synergy between cultural representatives and (visitors)” (Westlund 2000).

But tourism was not sustainable. Among other challenges, it was too expensive to maintain the museum, vehicles, and competitive wages. The P/PC balance had tipped.

6.1 Survey Results

Survey results offered more insight into local feelings about tourism to help develop appropriate guidelines and also allude to some reasons tourism declined. Qualitative surveys were used to guide informal interviews conducted with over two dozen residents, most involved in tourism past and present. Statistical analysis is beyond the scope of this research, but it was generally learned that:

- There is ambivalence about tourism. The good thing is it can bring economic benefits. It helped preserve Native culture. The bad thing is not many local people profit monetarily and that causes resentment.
- "Tourism in Kotzebue" almost always connotes the former NANA museum and Tour Arctic.
- Many people recall with resentment and indignity how tourists would peek in windows of private homes or make negative comments as Natives processed seal on the beach, and then take pictures of the activity without asking permission.
- Some people are very much against any tourism at all. Invasion of privacy is an issue, as is lack of local control.
- Some are very much for tourism development. These respondents were still involved in tourism related activities or had interest in future activities.

- Some feel management changes added to the downfall of NANA tourism.
- Some felt there was favoritism in determining which artists could sell their work through the museum gift shop.
- Most people are unsure how to improve tourism, reflecting that for the most part, tourism in Kotzebue was not controlled or managed by the community.
- Several felt it was still up to NANA to take the lead and "do tourism." One suggestion to improve tourism was to "get rid of alcohol." Both responses again reflected lack of local control of tourism.
- Everyone agreed wholeheartedly and recalled with fondness, that the museum and tourism strengthened Iñupiaq culture. Young people gained job skills, self-confidence, and learned to deal with outsiders. Mostly, the youth came to appreciate and value their elders, and traditional Iñupiaq knowledge, traditions and skills.

Revisiting NANA tourism can help avoid similar mistakes in future tourism and duplicate or build on what was successful. Principles and guidelines help sustain what works and improve on what does not. While most are aimed toward the tourism operator or entities wanting to manage them, all entities affected by tourism can apply guidelines as needed. The challenge of guidelines is always which ones to use and enforcement or implementation. But with the growing and more affluent population of green savvy travelers and local concerns about tourism, there is more incentive by all to support sustainable tourism.

In an industry breakthrough strongly confirming this trend, a press release issued October 6, 2008, by the UNWTO announced the "First-ever global sustainable tourism criteria." According to the website for the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria, "close to 100,000 tourism stakeholders" were consulted. "(M)ore than 4,500 criteria from more than 60 existing certification and other voluntary sets of criteria" were analyzed by a coalition of 27 organizations, resulting in these agreed upon criteria. Ideally, as the website states, this could be "the beginning of a process to make sustainability the standard practice in all forms of tourism."

Chapter 7 A Plan for Community Development

So how does a community bring together all this information and move toward sustainable tourism? Consulting partners and stakeholders must be identified and partnerships built. That means meetings, but with goals. Everyone needs to understand the concept of sustainable tourism, the possibilities, and what it means to the Kotzebue community and other stakeholders. What is their vision of the kind of tourism that would most benefit the community? What do they value? what is "sacred"? Principles and guidelines based on that vision and how to protect the sacred, need to be identified and agreed on. These lead to strategies and best practices of sustainable tourism.

Linkages should also be identified--entities, projects or programs directly or indirectly affecting the visitor economy. For example, the City of Kotzebue planning a pavement and boardwalk project to prevent beach erosion along Shore Avenue , designing this project to include not only enhancement of community infrastructure but also potential tourism in town.

Stakeholders and partners would ideally include the public at large, interested residents, and any individuals and public and private entities involved in tourism past, present, and future. Specifically:

- local governing bodies:
 - Northwest Arctic Borough (NWAB) – the most likely, objective entity to take the lead in efforts to plan for and guide tourism growth and development in the region
 - City of Kotzebue – the largest city in the NWAB and the community most immediately affected by tourism, whether negative or positive
 - Kotzebue (Qikiktagruq) IRA (QIRA) – the tribal government for Alaska Natives in Kotzebue
- federal and state public land managers - whose colleagues, consultants, seasonal workers, other professionals and guests come to work in the region

individually or in groups, and are also potential "tourists" to the region, for example:

- National Park Service Western Arctic Parklands
- Selawik National Wildlife Refuge (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- State of Alaska Fish & Game
- education entities such as the
 - NWAB School District, including the Nikiachuat Iñupiat language immersion school
 - Alaska Technical Center
 - Chukchi Campus of the University of Alaska Fairbanks
- other agencies, private entities, interested individuals
 - Maniilaq - the regional tribal health consortium whose multitude of health and wellness programs includes youth development and subsistence support, and whose itinerant and contract medical, public health, and other professional staff are potential cultural, nature or volunteer tourists
 - NANA – the Alaska Native Regional Corporation which owned and operated the local museum and Tour Arctic and is the largest private economic development entity in the region
 - Maniilaq Tribal Environmental Program - to support environmental planning, protection and restoration in the region and its villages
 - Kotzebue Electric Association (KEA) – the co-op which is very supportive of youth development and very involved in community events
 - KIC (Kikiktagruk Iñupiat Corporation) – the local for-profit Native village corporation
 - Sulianjich art center – supported by the NWAB, visitors and residents alike shop here for gifts, take classes, or buy and sell art work
 - LaVonne's Fish Camp

From this list, a core group needs to form and lead the development of a strategic plan and coordinate resources to move forward. Ideally, this group would work with a local authority such as the NWAB and actively engage the community.

Everyone needs to understand what sustainable tourism means, that Kotzebue's economy, and that of the region, is too dependent on mining, the Red Dog mine in particular, making it vulnerable to boom and bust cycles and whatever impacts that one industry. To be strong, an economy does not have to grow, as much as diversify, to be more resilient and adaptable to change. Sustainable tourism can help diversify the local economy, create more local business owners, or entrepreneurs, who should care more about their community than companies far away who only care about profits. This is very different from Kotzebue tourism prior to NANA.

NANA had a vision. "NANA did not take on tourism for money. The Corporation wanted an opportunity for self-interpretation of culture, viable job creation, a blending of traditional and modern knowledge and skill sets, honor for Elders and pride for young people" (Kari Westlund, personal communication, October 8, 2008). Many aspects and components of NANA and Tour Arctic intuitively incorporated principles of sustainability because they wanted to do the right thing for their people.

However, as Kurtz pointed out, the once authentic tours to Kotzebue became very standardized, predictable, making them easier to mass produce, offer to more customers, and be more profitable. As tourists became more sophisticated and demanding, the mass produced tour package held little appeal for those who seek an authentic or "unique experience" and "are willing to pay for (it)" (Snyder 2007:51; McKercher and du Cros 2002).

Sustainable tourism is an opportunity for people to work for themselves or supplement their income, in the outdoors and seasonally, doing things they enjoy (Campbell 2001; First Alaskans 2001; Fuerst 1988). For example, a boat ride with commercial passengers would help cover fuel and costs for the next subsistence hunting or fishing trip. Two people or families could take turns taking out visitors so neither

feels overburdened with responsibility. Visitors want to think their host is enjoying the trip as much as they are.

Sustainable tourism uses a comprehensive, holistic approach that cares for natural resources, human resources, infrastructure, partnerships, and customers. This is part of a needed paradigm shift and reflects an “integrated rural tourism” (IRT) approach that adheres to the concept of sustainability as a “bottom up” approach. It seeks “to empower local people and thereby contribute to the sustainability of the wider rural system” (Cawley and Gillmor 2007:318). As such, sustainable tourism ideally incorporates Iñupiaq values and complements and strengthens the traditional Iñupiaq way of life, while also creating long-term, generational benefits and offering economic and work opportunities in keeping with local values and way of life, or the sacred.

When a traditional fish camp in Kotzebue was at risk of becoming a site for gravel extraction, it caused a community uproar. As a result, the city designated the site a “park” to be protected indefinitely from such use. In 2008, another historical natural landmark on the Noatak River was also slated for gravel mining. An unprecedented public meeting was held, standing room only, no food or door prizes, for nearly three hours to discuss the future of this “sacred” multi-generational recreation and hunting site.

7.1 Possibilities

The possibilities for sustainable tourism are endless. The most obvious example of sustainable tourism for Kotzebue is the nature-based, soft adventure or eco- tour, where visitors use Kotzebue as a base. Such tours already occur here.

The visitor can take a flight seeing tour; hire a boat to go upriver and back; be dropped off to raft, kayak, canoe or hike the large system of public wild lands and countless rivers and streams, rich in scenery and wildlife. Some travelers are independent. Others prefer a guide, such as hikers or the increasing number of bird watchers or “birders.” Guides, in addition to leading the way, are there for “interpretation,” explaining to the visitor about the natural history of a place, local lore and culture, identifying habitat and species of flora and, hopefully, fauna, perhaps

giving their Iñupiaq names. This supports the criteria of cultural sustainability. It also helps ensure economic sustainability. Without a guide, many visitors would not venture into this “wild” region.

An interpretive guide adds value to the tour and thus, increases tour revenues. It also ensures environmental responsibility—people are respectful of the land and water, and waste is handled responsibly, perhaps following the “leave no trace” policy of the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS). A guide or local contact ensures that needed permits are acquired. As Iñupiaq culture, including subsistence, is so closely tied to the land and vital to the community, this also supports cultural and community or social responsibility. If the guide is local and the “tour package” includes a day or two spent in Kotzebue, those promote economic benefit to the community.

Arctic Circle Educational Adventures a.k.a. LaVonne's Camp is a type of sustainable alternative tourism, learning vacation and ecotourism. Several miles down the coast from Kotzebue, it combines cultural and nature-based tourism in a learning environment and has sustained itself for decades. If one examines LaVonne's using the sustainability criteria, one can see why. Why isn't LaVonne's more successful, that is, bringing in more visitors? Following AWRTA ecotourism guidelines, perhaps LaVonne realizes that at some point, a “group becomes too large to be considered 'ecotourism'” (AWRTA). Most eco-tourists want to get off the beaten path and not be part of mass tourism, a sentiment echoed by two older couples visiting Kotzebue recently.

Another example of potentially sustainable tourism is Anuktuuvuk Pass, a small Nunamiut Eskimo village in remote, interior Arctic Alaska. A tourist brochure boasts “No two tours alike.” As visitors seek the authentic, this is an additional attraction for a village already known for being friendly and welcoming to visitors (Huntington et al. 2007). To be respectful of the community, visitors are given an orientation before embarking on the trip, including what they can and cannot do. But as tours are added, taking advantage of the midnight sun, it is harder to “balance life,” says a key staff at the small museum, adding that residents like their “quiet lifestyle” and do not want to be “invaded too much” (Personal communication, May 16, 2008). Fortunately, residents

are aware of the need to address this potential red flag in order to sustain tourism benefits.

Other examples of potential sustainable tourism include rafting trips out of Kaktovik, Alaska, in the high Arctic, run by local residents. Dig Afognak in Kodiak, Alaska, a form of cultural tourism, learning vacation, and community development, began as an archeological dig to restore and preserve the community's cultural history. Birding, a form of niche ecotourism is increasing rapidly around the world (Weaver 2001). Alaska is a major national and international birding destination. Communities in Western Alaska are pursuing this type of ecotourism (McDowell 2004).

Noting that birds are also an important traditional food source to village residents, the VIBES study highlighted the importance of “community cohesion” to help ensure the sustainability of this type of tourism. Birders and hunters sought the birds at the same time. Hunters agreed to wait until after the tourists left. Then shot the birds.

Another example of community cohesion was when a B&B in a popular hunting area did not rent rooms to sport hunters because of community resentment of sport hunting. The B&B chose to lose business rather than cause more local conflict. This is also an example of being socially and culturally sensitive or responsible.

7.2 New Direction for Tourism

McLaren, in *Rethinking Tourism*, describes how residents of Ladakh, India, in a remote mountainous region, concerned about negative effects of tourism development, created a center for ecology and development which “teaches tourists and locals about the impacts of tourism on their culture and environment.” The center is solar powered, helping to “introduce appropriate technologies” as well as pass down traditional knowledge, and “recruit(s) tourists (as volunteers on) many of their projects” (1998:110).

Similar to the example above, there is an opportunity to use linkages and offer learning vacations in Kotzebue. The town hosts international visitors interested in our famous arctic wind farm, the largest in Alaska. Visitors and local residents can be

offered day or weeklong classes in modern wind and other renewable energy projects, coupled with ancient technology using other renewable resources through classes in:

- traditional wood sled making
- basket making (including harvesting the materials)
- bead work, carving
- skin sewing (fur hats, mukluks, etc.)
- dog mushing
- *atikluk* (kuspuk) sewing
- berry picking and making preserves, etc.
- processing and cooking game meat and marine mammals
- identifying and harvesting edible and medicinal wild plants
- conversational Iñupiaq and more.

Benefits would include employment of local experts, young and old, using many natural renewable resources and supporting Native culture. As with Tour Arctic, tourism could build self-confidence and pride in people and strengthen and preserve traditional skills and knowledge (Kanahele 1989).

Snyder (2007) indicates that sport hunting and fishing are big income earners for people in remote polar areas with world class hunting and fishing. While the topic is unpopular in Kotzebue, sport hunting and guiding can also be very promising economic opportunities for local people, especially indigenous people who know the land so well, if this simple principle is adhered to: locals first. The local community must be the ultimate beneficiary. If their needs and concerns are addressed, all could benefit.

Of course, the business has to make money, but if that negatively affects the community or what it values, then tough decisions must be made on community priorities and control. By demonstrating benefits to the community at large—not necessarily monetary, but for example, sharing with others how to get started in business or teaching hunting skills to young Iñupiat—this activity could be seen in a more positive light. People could put aside differences long enough to discuss how this could work, respecting the values, principles, and concerns of each affected party. This

process could also help resolve conflicts, resentment, and envy reflective of the crab pot mentality.

The following guiding principles are suggested for individuals, business owners and local authorities in Kotzebue to cultivate and grow sustainable tourism:

- Begin with the end in mind. Have a vision to strive for.
- You have to love what you are doing, not just the money. Because in the beginning, to be successful, you will be doing it a lot. Fortunately, there are many non-monetary benefits of tourism, for both host and guest:
- But money is important. A sound business plan, administrative and financial management skills, and marketing are critical for financial success and sustainability. Get needed training. Reinvest back into the community.
- There must be accurate, frequent, and two-way communication. To allay community concerns, tourism and project planning and development must be transparent, nothing to hide. This helps avoid conflicts and suspicion. If there is contention, resolve it in advance or risk suspicion and resentment sabotaging the proposed activity.
- There must be partnerships, collaboration and a core group to take the lead. Strive for consensus, but accept the majority, compromise, and continue to seek consensus, within and outside of the community.
- Effective marketing must be a component. Marketing sets visitor expectations to avoid disappointment. If visitors want to see the caribou migration and the midnight sun, explain they cannot do both in one visit. Let visitors know if there are no flush toilets. Happy visitors spend more money. Marketing can attract the kind of visitor that can appreciate what Kotzebue has to offer.
- Community support is critical. For viable and sustainable tourism, it must meet community needs or ensure benefit to community. Anything planned or proposed to benefit tourism should first benefit the community and overall quality of life. What benefits the community will also benefit tourism.

Without full community support, even one resentful resident can sabotage the efforts of many. Promote “community cohesion.”

- A code of ethics and conduct must be followed by visitors, business owners, and the affected community.
- Developing, implementing, and monitoring a plan for sustainability is critical (Getz 1983). As recently as 2005, informal discussions on tourism development in Kotzebue focused mainly on marketing, jobs and income. It has to do more for truly sustainable development.
- Offer more than just entertainment or pleasure, but something meaningful and satisfying to both the visitor and the host.
- P/PC (production/production capability) balance must be maintained. Ensure there is “production.” But do not overload production capability or producer. Sustainability is sustaining the production capability of nature.

This last is vital. Whatever is the desired or needed production (P), we must take care of that which produces it (PC—production capability). For visitor lodging, natural materials can be used and the most energy efficient design and construction possible. Use LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) green building standards if appropriate. Lower materials, operations and maintenance costs will help lower lodging (business) expenses, leaving more profit, and helping sustain the business. Whether wood or caribou skin, it must be maintained, cared for, to last. Everything produces “waste.” As much as possible, reduce, reuse or recycle to prevent waste as much as possible. Use reusable tableware or avoid Styrofoam and disposable plastic items. Natural waste can more easily be burned or decomposes naturally.

These practices also appeal to the conscientious “green” tourist or traveler which corporations such as Marriott and cruise lines are also trying to attract. Visitors and residents, we all love the land and what it gives us. We need to take care of it, for it to keep giving--and in the case of tourism, to keep visitors coming back.

One strategy to implement and support sustainable tourism is a “community care fund.” Similar in concept to the CDQ (community development quota system) that

funnels a portion of Alaska commercial fishing profits back to participating fishery communities, a percentage of tourism related profits would be returned to the community. The fund would be used for community development projects such as boardwalks, neighborhood gardens, beautification and cleanup, youth programs, traditional dance groups, local search and rescue, etc. that improve the quality of life for all residents. AWRTA members promote a similar, successful Dollar-a-Day for Conservation program to their customers who are by and large very environmentally aware. Inuit-owned Cruise North Expeditions charge landing fees to benefit communities they visit.

Marketing not only attracts the kinds of visitors the community wants, but also sets visitor expectations (Colt et al. 2007; McKercher and du Cros 2002; National Bank of Alaska 1999). Not doing either can hurt the community, the visitor, and tourism. As in very early tourism in Kotzebue, unprepared visitors can be unwittingly disrespectful or offensive. Similarly, in Northwest Territories, Canada, contemporary Inuit beluga hunters experience this conflict with tourists who come on whale watching tours and come across indigenous people pursuing their traditional way of life hunting and processing beluga (Dressler et al. 2001). Informed whale watchers might have been able to instead appreciate this ancient skill. Ironically, Inuit of Clyde River are excited by the prospect of whale watchers and potential tourism in Baffin Bay (Nickels et al. 1991).

In Iran, tourists stay in traditional-style resting places that have served travelers for thousands of years. Made of natural local materials that have "resisted hundreds of years of wind, rain, and sun" (Tavassoli 2002:106), this can be a draw for visitors who want a cultural experience and support environmental and cultural sustainability. Locally, traditional caribou skin tents have been used as novel summer tourist lodging. But for visitors expecting a modern Hilton hotel, this might be an unhappy surprise.

Surveys show that more visitors to rural Alaska use the internet to research their destination (75%) and make reservations (50%) (McDowell 2006a). Marketing by internet can be very effective and affordable. The NPS web pages on "Things To Do"

and “Things To Know Before You Go” do an excellent job of setting visitor expectations:

Visitors should be prepared to enjoy a non-traditional National Park Service experience. . . . no roads, trails, campgrounds or regularly attended ranger stations a wild area. . . . bear country.

This both deters those who are looking for a Yosemite Park weekend camping experience, and would be a liability in this environment, and attracts those who want a truly extraordinary experience, peace and solitude, and can afford to pay for it.

One vision for a sustainable visitor economy (tourism) is attracting those who want to get off the beaten path, see spectacular inspiring country and get to know the people, their culture and traditions by participating in a beneficial community activity or event. The visitor is not just coming to stare at us and take our picture (Browne and Nolan 1989), or tell others back home how much we really are or are not like a Northern Exposure TV sitcom, though the wackiness and extraordinary are part of the authentic challenge and charm of living here.

The same challenge and charm drew first-time and returning volunteers to an Anchorage based tax assistance program that sent out small teams of college students and faculty to villages across the bush. As this was prior to the April 15 tax deadline, snow, ice, blizzards and weather delays were normal. This only attracted participants who sought an Alaska adventure and the chance to meet and assist rural Alaska residents.

Sustainable tourism for Kotzebue means not only the concepts, principles, and guidelines here but tourism that is community based, community driven, and endures over the long term. It must be resilient, able to change as necessary to respond to changing consumer desires and still honor community values.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

A Park Service staff related how one summer an older couple visited the NPS Innaigviq visitor center in Kotzebue. Many years ago they had been here "on the tour." They had returned on their own. Why? That trip back in 1980 was the "greatest thing" of their life. With big smiles on their faces, they recalled the blanket toss and the elders.

Tourism, like anything else, will always have its detractors and faults. But it can also create that experience of joy and appreciation of tradition in visitors that was obviously reflected in the faces of the people decades ago. More than ever, people are searching for that authentic, meaningful experience (Nuryanti 1996; Richards 2008).

Korten describes a "people-centered vision of development and growth" (1990:5) where "people and the living systems . . . that is their home come first" (1990:67). Development is a "transformational" process and a "sense of community and resource stewardship essential to sustainability" (1990:44). If economic development does not improve people's quality of life, what good is it? Sustainable tourism is people-centered economic development.

Cliché as it sounds, we start with the visioning process. What do we protect? What is sacred? What do we change? How does it benefit the most people? What would make this a great place to live, work, raise a family? How do we uplift and strengthen the community to become the best community it can be? When that comes, tourists will come. And we will not have to "perform" or pretend to be what they expect us to be (Laxson 1991; Liu and Var 1986; McLaren 1999; Smith 1969, 1989).

How can we attract the best visitors (Dalby 1996)? What makes a good visitor? While a tourist brings in revenue via the hotel or lodging, food purchases, or buying artwork or other gifts, leakage sends it right back out. For a visitor or tourism to be truly welcome, they must bring more than just money and jobs.

The Volunteer Vacations website, sponsored by CheapTickets and the United Way, urges readers to "Give back to the tourism communities that give you the vacation

of a lifetime". Hundreds of websites on volunteer vacations appeal to a growing number of individuals who want to find, as one site suggests, a "meaningful way to re-energize."

Visitor-volunteers could come up to help us with Iñupiaq Days in the school, working alongside Kotzebue residents and others throughout the region to teach students *atikluk* (kuspuk) making, *niksik* making (a fishing jig), winter survival, harpoon making, harpoon throwing, beading, birch bark basket making, storytelling, donut making (Eskimo fry bread), Native dance, and so many others.

For a fee, visitors would have homestay lodging (more if the hotel), lunch at the school with the kids, and attend and then volunteer to assist in Iñupiaq Day classes. If they want to make their own *atikluk* or *niksik*, the fee would include materials. If they want to take a dog sled ride or snowmachine ride, the fee would be more. A visit to the Senior Center or ice fishing could be included.

These activities would benefit the community beyond money and jobs. The extra intangible benefits would be mutual enjoyment, and cultural appreciation, pride, and revitalization, "making traditions a more vital part of community life. . . . increasing (its) level of practice" (Guyette 1996:81). There might be more Iñupiaq Days, more interest in Native Youth Olympic games. Perhaps blanket tosses would be revived. This is truly community-based, people-centered development.

Volunteer tourism or "visitor activities" that benefit the community and residents are only limited by the imagination. Each summer, youth culture camps in the area welcome volunteers such as Friends of the Refuge, a non-profit group with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Other summer staff come up through the Park Service. Each summer these volunteers and staff leave as advocates for Kotzebue, with a better understanding and appreciation for the indigenous way of life and its challenges in modern rural Alaska. Alison McIntosh and Anne Zahra documented similar experiences with volunteers in a Maori community in New Zealand (2007).

In November 2008, months of planning by a core community group culminated in an intense one-day winterization project of the homes of elders in Kotzebue. The effort brought together and organized volunteers community-wide, including local

students, and a multitude of sponsors in and outside of Kotzebue, including a chartered plane of forty corporate sponsors and employees. The high was 15 degrees (F) below zero. Teams paired local volunteers with those from Outside.

The event ended with a grand community-wide potluck at the school. Elders sang a heartwarming rendition of "*Aarigaa*," a popular song of appreciation. It was evident everyone had enjoyed themselves immensely. The visitors were asked if it was hard to find volunteers to fly in. The response was, as soon as word got out, everyone rushed to sign up. This could have easily been a "volunteer vacation" project, adding optional winter activities or a project in a village. Many people crave this type of adventure in off-road Alaska (Moore 1999). Visitors from urban Alaska, such as the tax assistance volunteers, who leave with a positive feeling and one of personal connection become advocates for rural Alaska and help close the urban-rural divide.

After the elder home winterization project, community members were aglow. Many expressed the desire to do more such projects and extend the program to the villages. Others declared they had not had that much fun in a long time. Everyone felt good about helping the elders, but the highlight was interacting with the visitors and feeling pride when visitors asked questions about life in the Arctic, remarked on the beauty of a traditional style fur parka ("and it wasn't even a fancy parky," remarked one amused local woman), or were enrapt listening to our elders.

Why else do visitors come? From summer 2003 to 2005, surveys showed that of the top five visitor activities in rural Alaska, wildlife viewing (59%), shopping (61%), and hiking and nature walks (44%) are all up by at least 6% each. The remaining two, fishing (46%) and cultural activities (46%) are down but still relatively strong. (McDowell 2006a:26). Volunteer tourism in Kotzebue can offer all these, plus the enriching experience of personal connection and making a difference.

These small steps that allow local people to benefit monetarily, culturally and personally, are conducive to gradual development of a visitor economy. For people that have a day or two in Kotzebue, a simple brochure could be available at the airport to let independent travelers know where there is espresso coffee in town; that the Maniilaq

medical center has the best exhibit of Native art in town; that you can buy your own at Sulianich; that there are books, postcards and more at Innaigviq; and that, as one older visiting couple remarked, "simply exploring the town and talking with people who all seem ready to talk to you" can be very rewarding.

If visitors volunteered to be part of our community for a day or a few days, they would 1) be welcomed as a guest versus a stranger, 2) feel welcome and appreciated, 3) laugh with us, and not at us, 4) learn more about the bush, Native culture and way of life that most people never will, 5) instill more pride and self-esteem in the people about their Iñupiaq culture, 6) share their stories with us, as we would be more open to listen to a visitor than a "tourist," 7) learn a different world view, 8) open our eyes to their world view, 9) become an advocate for a unique way of life, for Native culture, and 10) perhaps return another time to revisit newly made friends.

There is no guaranteed recipe to realize truly sustainable tourism. But this lull in tourism is a wonderful reprieve, a moment to regroup, rethink and do tourism the right way—with more community involvement and ownership, to aspire to a form of tourism that allays resident concerns, addresses community expectations, and helps revitalize the community. Much of this can be achieved if tourism is guided and managed based on the guiding principle that it first and ultimately benefits the local community. In keeping with the P/PC principle, this helps meet residents' needs first; improving local quality of life to uplift and create a strong, healthy, successful community for themselves first, and by extension, for their visitors.

This quiet time is an opportunity to set the stage to nurture and guide people-centered development, such as volunteer community-based tourism, not just jobs and money. How uplifting when one of the visiting winterization volunteers declares that this was the best experience in her life. Surely, others, locals and visitors, felt similarly. Rather than being seen with ambivalence, tourism can be a welcome, natural, and long-term component of becoming, and being, a thriving, resilient, and healthy community where people want to live, work and raise their family—where everyone gains.

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